Re-Centering:

Indiana's Movement to Ground Domestic Violence Programs in Survivor-Defined Success

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on behalf of

ICADV

Indiana Coalition *Against* Domestic Violence

Prevention • Awareness • Advocacy
Until the Violence Ends.

Acknowledgments

The Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence would like to express our deepest appreciation to all of the survivors who shared their wisdom with us in multiple ways, throughout this project. Our commitment to you is to take our next steps, with courage and resolve, to make the advice that you shared with us matter. We commit to maintaining our processes for re-centering domestic violence programs and services in survivor-defined success as we move forward. We invite your ongoing participation, and commit to reporting back about the strategies that we are trying, and what we are learning so that you can help us to know what we need to do next.

We extend our appreciation, admiration and affection to the community domestic violence programs that invested their time, resources and immense patience to join us in this process. You all created the framework that enables this project to stand. Thanks for bringing the courage to own dissatisfaction with our programs' status quo, and to explore the possibilities of different. Thanks for helping to articulate our vision, to collect and promote survivors' stories, and preemptive thanks for the next work that we will share to build out survivor-defined service alternatives.

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A note about using this document:

In conducting this project, our focus was on utility – to identify and facilitate action on survivor-defined priorities within the domestic violence field. We invite you to approach this document in that same spirit—use it in the ways that are most useful for your community. For some it may make sense to follow our journey by reading the whole document, but we've constructed the report in a way that also allows you to skip to guidance on the recommendation areas that your community prioritizes for action. ***Click the section headers (above) to be directed to the corresponding page.***

Executive Summary

In the fall of 2016 the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV), in collaboration with member programs from across the state, initiated a multi-year process of re-centering Indiana's prevention strategies and program services in survivor-defined needs. The ICADV was founded in 1980, and after nearly 40 years of service, the time felt right to evaluate Indiana's response to domestic violence.

With this effort, we wanted to know what types of programs and services were most valued, what needs were unmet, and fundamentally, how communities could reduce violence by increasing safety and supports for all of us. We wanted to explore what "different" might look like across prevention strategies, programs and services. We undertook this process with a balance of deep respect and appreciation for the supports that advocates have built in Indiana over the past four decades, but also with accountability for the survivors who have been left behind because our programs didn't recognize and support their needs.

Twelve member programs serving communities across Indiana joined the Coalition in the process of assessment and development. Together, we explored what we needed to know from survivors in order to build and promote programs that would be relevant, accessible, and supportive for all survivors of domestic violence. As a group, we committed to a process that would center the lived experiences of survivors in this assessment, and established practices to keep us accountable to survivors throughout our progress and recommendations.

The cohort of member programs carefully defined the sample of survivors that we needed to hear from in order to ensure the inclusion of survivors with diverse identities from across Indiana. Particular attention was paid to hearing from survivors who have been unserved or underserved because of barriers related to identity-based discrimination, disabilities, homeless status, criminal justice histories, immigration status, or challenges related to mental health or addictions. We were committed to hearing both from individuals who had used services from domestic violence programs and from those who had not. We needed all of these perspectives to get a broad overview of what we are doing well, what other services we should be offering, and strategies that we could use to increase the awareness, availability, and competence of our services for survivors who had not known, or had reason to believe that we were there for them.

In the ten-month period from December, 2017 through October, 2018, members of the cohort conducted 91 individual interviews and also five focus group discussions with survivors. In reviewing transcripts from the interviews and focus groups, key themes were identified for preventive actions to increase safety at the community level, and also for improvements and innovations within service delivery systems.

Key Needs Described by Survivors: Community Safety and Wellbeing

HOUSING

Increase the availability of safe, stable and affordable housing.

ASSISTANCE

Expand eligibility for social safety net programs, including increasing income limits, and allowing supports for immigrants and survivors with criminal histories.

ACCEPTANCE

Educate communities about the dynamics of domestic violence so many people are prepared to help; and to reduce the judgment and stigma around the problem.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

Promote neighborhood safety and connectedness with things like neighborhood watch programs and free activities that bring neighbors together.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Work on things like living wages, education and job training opportunities, increasing minimum wage and addressing the gender pay gap.

Key Needs Described by Survivors: Domestic Violence Programs

SURVIVOR SUPPORTS

Offer more supports for survivors including support groups, therapy and survivor mentoring programs.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Expand the availability of affordable (low-cost/pro bono) and high-quality legal assistance programs for criminal and civil cases.

COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE

Continue to conduct domestic violence training for the broad range of professionals that respond to domestic violence to make sure that survivors get a skilled and compassionate response.

INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS

Make sure that domestic violence programs work for all survivors. Programs should be welcoming to people of all races, ethnicities, sexual and gender identities, and religious groups, and accessible for people with disabilities, as well as for individuals who have been homeless or incarcerated.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Place domestic violence service information everywhere that you can in the community so that people know where to go for help. Also, make sure that community services are well coordinated so that community partners know about each other's programs and can work together to support survivors.

Going forward,

ICADV and member programs will work at the state and local levels to take action on the needs that survivors described. At the state level, the Coalition is using the findings to inform our public policy agenda, to advocate for state and community-based funding in support of this work and to refine trainings, technical assistance and service standards for domestic violence programs. Additionally, a second cohort of member programs has volunteered to work together to build out and pilot the programmatic innovations that survivors discussed, and a working group has been convened to explore accountability alternatives. We are eager to take these next steps to broadly support the protective conditions that can help to deter violence, to promote effective accountability practices, and to provide relevant, compassionate supports for all survivors of domestic violence in Indiana.

Project Progress to date

Process

In 2014, members of the ICADV staff joined with other state domestic and sexual violence coalitions and national partners in exploratory conversations about the nature and future of our work. We reflected on the history of the domestic and sexual violence movements in the US, and on the programs and systems that advocates worked to create. We explored the ways in which cultural values impact the lives of those who experience violence. We discussed the intersections between our work and other movements focused on eliminating oppression. Most deeply, we thought about the world that we wanted to work towards—a world characterized by liberation where all of us can safely live and thrive. We thought strategically about who we needed to be, and what we needed to work on, in order to pursue that vision.

We invited the domestic and sexual violence community in Indiana to engage in a parallel process to assess our work and to determine our next direction—both in terms of survivor services and in efforts to promote safe communities to prevent violence. In August of 2016, leaders from all of Indiana's domestic and sexual violence programs were invited to a two-day gathering to initiate the process of assessment, reflection and planning. Nan Stoops from the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and also a member of the national Move to End Violence program, facilitated this visioning conversation.

At the conclusion of this gathering, member programs were invited to participate in the initial cohort to determine next steps. 12 community-based programs volunteered to invest their time in this exploratory process. Participating programs represented a broad range of communities and also service delivery structures including non-residential programs, shelter-based programs, and transitional housing programs. The group agreed to a monthly meeting schedule to take the time necessary to develop a shared understanding of our philosophy and goals.

The cohort meetings began in November, 2016. We began by reviewing our movement's history—including goals developed in the 1980's, the development of regional domestic violence programs, and also the broader systemic domestic violence infrastructure (legislation, funding, the criminal justice response). We discussed the benefits and the inadequacies of these solutions. We explored our practice-based experience to identify frustrations expressed by survivors who had engaged with our services, and also to describe unmet service needs. We discussed primary prevention strategy and thought about our opportunities to prevent violence by promoting safe, stable and nurturing communities. We articulated our commitment to centering the interests of community members with identities and experiences that have resulted in exclusion.

Listening to Survivors

Methods:
Interviews
Focus Groups
Literature Review

With a shared understanding of our history and purpose, our focus moved to collecting advice from survivors in order to determine our next steps to promote community safety, and also to provide service programs that were responsive to survivors' needs. Because our purpose was to hear from survivors, broadly, for the purpose of improving our services and prevention strategies, the cohort members agreed to a utility standard, rather than a more rigorous research standard, as we planned for our sample and methods. The cohort members decided that individual interviews, with a broadly inclusive sample of domestic violence survivors, was the best method for receiving, respecting and taking action on the complexities of survivors' experiences and needs.

The cohort met several times to deliberate about what we wanted to know, then to distill those wonderings into interview questions. We wanted to know about successes and barriers within the service system, but also wanted to invite survivors to share advice about service alternatives and strategies for promoting broader community safety. Additionally, we invited survivors to tell us how they thought communities should hold people accountable for abusive behavior. The group worked to create neutrally worded, open-ended interview questions with the hope that we would not inadvertently influence responses with any preferences or biases that we have about the work.

Here is a summary of the questions that we asked (the full interview instrument with prompts and interviewer instructions is available to view and download at icadvinc.org/movement).

1. If you could paint a picture of a safe life, what would that look like? What does safety mean to you?
2. Do you currently feel safe?
3. What things could community organizations do to support your safety and needs?
4. In addition to helping people who have experienced abuse be safe in the ways that matter most to them, we also want to support them in having a satisfying and happy life. That's why we're asking this next question: What changes within your local community would help you have a more satisfying and happy life?
5. If you were designing resources for people who have experienced abuse, what would those resources be or look like?
6. Who, if anyone, did you seek out for support related to the abuse you experienced in your relationship?
7. Were there people or organizations you would have preferred to seek out for support, but for some reason they did not feel like a good resource for you?
8. What needs were unmet in your experience?
9. Have you ever felt you needed to change or hide something about yourself in order to get the help you wanted from an organization or a service provider?
10. What would you like for me to know about the response the person who committed the abuse in the relationship experienced?
11. If you could paint a picture of responses for people who use abuse, what would that look like?
12. What else would you like me to know about your experience or about how Indiana can better serve people who have experienced abuse?

With the completion of the interview guide and brief training on interview methods, cohort members began interviewing survivors in December of 2017. Through the course of conducting interviews, advocates noticed points of confusion among participants—both because the wording of the questions was complicated (an unintended outcome of our attempt not to influence respondents), and because we were asking survivors to help us imagine new and different service delivery, prevention and accountability strategies. We learned what a tough assignment this was. Survivors could easily tell us about the successes and challenges in their experience, but it was difficult for them to dream up alternatives, on the spot, within the interview.

With recognition of this challenge, but with persistent hope that survivors could help us to imagine service alternatives, the cohort decided to convene focus group discussions. In the focus groups, the facilitators posed simplified versions of key questions, and allowed participants to brainstorm together about new approaches to the problem of domestic violence. Five focus group conversations were conducted—three were convened through member programs' standing community support groups, one group was conducted in Spanish and one was conducted with incarcerated survivors.

Finally, because we anticipated the inevitability of gaps in the sample of survivors that we heard from, we sought to supplement our learnings with a literature review. Students enrolled in the Social Determinants of Health class with Dr. Robert Aronson at Taylor University conducted this method in the spring of 2018 by collecting survivors' writings about their experiences available from articles, service organizations, online groups and blogs.

The students' literature reviews focused on identifying unique challenges and recommendations from underserved communities with summaries of key themes from survivors who identified as Asian, African-American, Hispanic and as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Sample

In framing the sample of people we needed to hear from, cohort members chose to prioritize outreach to those survivors who experience multiple barriers to service. This strategy was guided by the belief that where we create programs that are welcoming and relevant for the survivor who has been most marginalized, we create physically and socially inclusive service environments that benefit survivors from all walks of life.

Cohort members needed to hear from survivors with a broad range of identities and life experiences to better understand the contexts in which people are experiencing violence and also how communities respond to survivors. In describing a sufficient sample, cohort members wanted to hear from survivors from diverse economic and geographic backgrounds, across age groups, genders, racial and ethnic identities, abilities, sexual and relational orientations, religious affiliations, and immigration status. Additionally, we wanted to know about respondents' histories with historical trauma, family violence, community violence, homelessness, addiction and incarceration.

As we discussed the question of identities and identifiers, we acknowledged that some of our identities can change over time. We anticipated that we would be interviewing survivors across the prolonged timeframe of recovery where some respondents would be reporting on recent experiences of abuse and others would be reporting about experiences that occurred years or even decades ago. With that, we struggled to determine which identities to record—identities at the time of the abuse, or current identities. The cohort decided that each of these identities, those from the past and current identities, are true for the respondents. We wanted to allow participants to report on both, so we created a demographic form that invited participants to share then and now identity information.

With this method, two identities could be recorded for the same respondent in a particular category (ie, respondent identified as straight at the time of the abuse, but now identifies as bi-sexual). In summarizing the sample, we only counted two identities for an individual in a category when that identifier changed over time (ie, we wouldn't count two heterosexual responses if that survivor's identity was the same then and now; we would count one heterosexual response and one bi-sexual response where a change in the identity occurred). Accordingly, the number of identities in each category does not add up to the total number of respondents. This seeming inconsistency represents shifting identities, not inaccurate calculations. Similarly, the provision of identity information was completely voluntary; the demographic information that we share below represents the self-identified characteristics that respondents chose to share with interviewers, but does not represent the full sample of survivors who participated in the interviewing process.

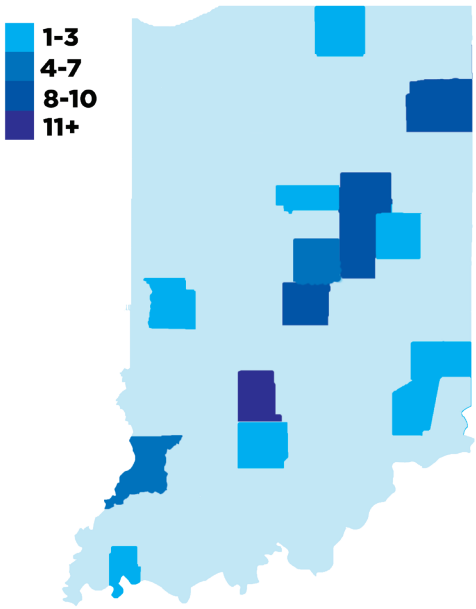
Cohort participants began conducting survivor interviews in December, 2017. We initially anticipated that the interview process would last for about six months, but the cohort members agreed that collecting a sufficient sample was a better priority than adhering to an arbitrary timeline.

Cohort members reviewed the sample at a meeting in the spring of 2018 and determined that traditionally marginalized populations remained under-represented. With that, we agreed to extend the interviewing period and to engage in a second round of strategic outreach--both through formal organizational networks and informal social media networks—to these communities.

By October, 2018, cohort members had conducted a total of 91 individual interviews. Demographic representation for racial and ethnic minorities, and also sexual minorities closely paralleled representation among those groups in the broader Indiana population. We had strong representation among Spanish speaking survivors, survivors who had experienced incarceration, survivors who identified with one or more disabilities and survivors who had experienced homelessness. Areas of notable under-representation included individuals who identified with religious traditions other than Christianity and also survivors who identify as Asian.

The charts below provide an overview of some of the lived experiences and demographic information that survivors shared with us.

Counties Represented



Type of Community

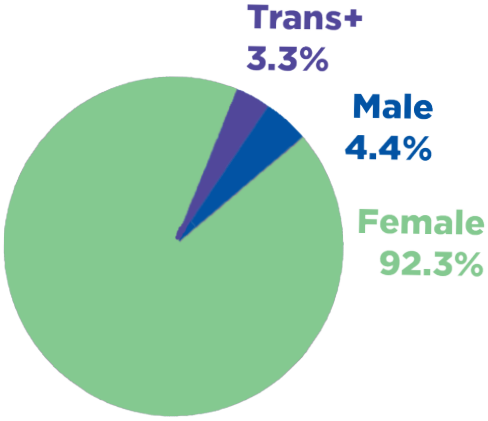
23 Large City

49 Medium Town

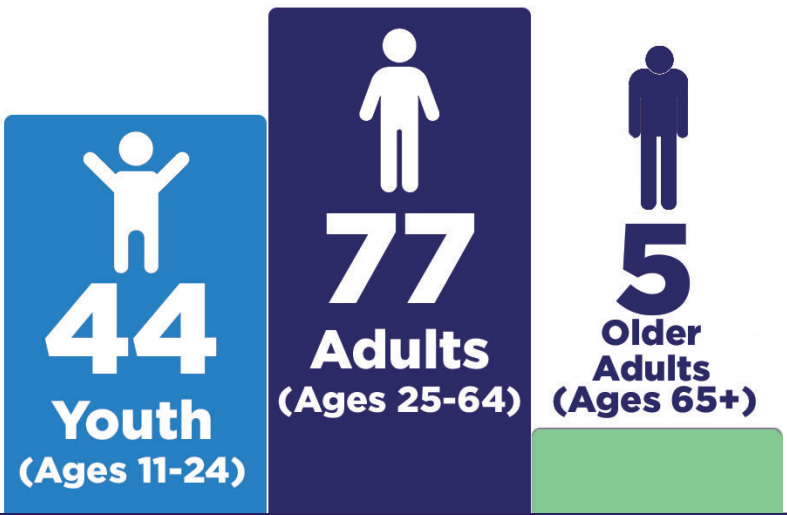
35 Small Town

11 Rural Area

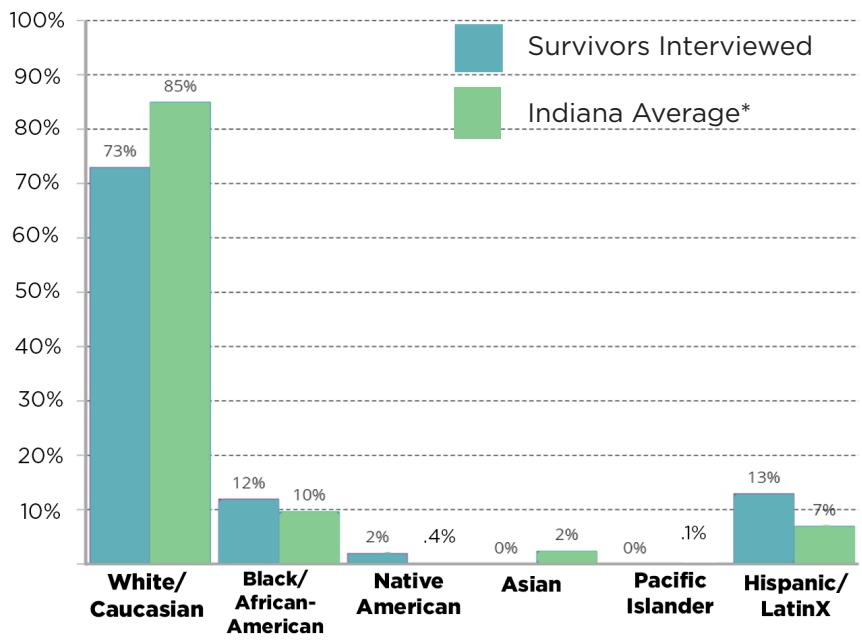
Gender Identity



Age



Race/Ethnicity



17 participants identified as part of a community that has experienced a long history of violence or trauma (i.e., African-American and Indigenous communities)

Top 5 Countries of Origin:

1. United States 2. Mexico 3. Canada
4. Colombia 5. Trinidad & Tobago

$$$$$$$$$
63 Low Income

$$$$$$$$
50 Middle Income

$$
4 High Income

*Based on US Census data from July 1, 2018

Areas of Vulnerability

23% identify as **having a disability**

1/3 were **pregnant at the time of the abuse.**

43% **witnessed domestic violence** as a child.

31% **witnessed another form of violence** in their community as a child.

21% reported experiences of **past or current homelessness.**

49% had or have experience with **substance abuse/ misuse.**

10 identify as **members of the LGBTQ+ community.**

26% reported **histories of incarceration.**

Recruitment

The cohort used convenience sampling to identify interview respondents. More randomized sampling strategies weren't feasible—both because of the limited resources available for the project, and because the total population of domestic violence survivors in Indiana could not be known (programs are only aware of those survivors who reach out for services, and we are aware that the majority of individuals who experience domestic violence do not make contact with formal domestic violence programs). Targeted outreach to survivors previously served by participating programs was rejected out of the concern that such contact could compromise former clients' confidentiality and safety.

ICADV and partners announced the project and invited survivor participation through our electronic and print communication channels. Additionally, the information and recruitment requests were shared broadly through community and organizational partners. Project overviews with pull-tab contact information were posted on community bulletin boards. Purposive outreach was undertaken to invite participation among survivors who may have been excluded from services including engagement with homeless service agencies, jails, mental health and addictions programs, veteran service groups, LGBTQ+ communities, and agencies that center services for ethnic and racial minorities.

In order to compensate survivors for their time, and with particular attention to supporting the participation of survivors with low incomes, we offered a $25 gift card to a local grocery store as an incentive. Survivors who were incarcerated at the time of their interview were provided with a $25 credit on their account within the facility.

Data Collection & Analysis

With each interview, survivors were asked to consent to the data collection option that felt safest for them. Options included allowing the interview to be recorded for professional transcription, allowing the interviewer to take notes during the session, or requesting that no record be collected, but that the interviewer simply listen to receive their story and experiences. Where transcripts or notes were collected, respondents were assured that their confidentiality would be maintained. With the report, findings would be presented in the aggregate, and though survivor quotes would be used to illustrate key points, no quotes with unique or potentially identifiable details would be included.

Our team of interviewers used consistent methods in the survivor interview process, but we also embraced the flexibility that would allow us and survivors to go off script where other questions or stories emerged. Many respondents' answers conformed closely to the questions, but others chose to tell their stories, or to center their responses in the experiences and advice that felt most urgent to them. The interviews ranged in time from under ten minutes, to over two hours; recorded interviews averaged slightly under one hour.

Coding

Five members of the cohort volunteered to conduct an initial transcript review to identify key themes and to build the coding framework for data analysis. Each reviewer coded five transcripts; with this, the coding framework was created from 27 percent of the total sample (25/91). Because there was significant overlap and interplay in survivors' responses across question areas, we decided not to code responses for each question, but rather by the consistent, solution-oriented themes that arose across question groups. The coding working group approved this data analysis framework, but we also agreed to maintain an open coding process with the flexibility to add new codes where unique themes emerged through the course of data analysis.

ICADV staff uploaded all of the survivor transcripts to the Dedoose qualitative data analysis platform and utilized our coding framework to identify key themes in the survivor interviews. Two members of the ICADV staff reviewed and coded the transcripts. We began by reviewing several transcripts together to practice using the Dedoose program, and also to discuss questions that emerged for us. Through the process of mutual review, we ensured that we were defining and applying the code categories in consistent ways.

Survivor Involvement

At the outset of the project, cohort members affirmed their commitment to creating a transparent and collaborative relationship with the survivors who shared their experiences with us. Though we acknowledged that there were many survivors among our cohort, we needed to be accountable to those living and working outside of our service structure. With each interview, survivors were invited into longer involvement with opportunities to provide feedback across the remainder of the project. Opportunities for ongoing engagement included volunteering for follow up questions and/or advocacy opportunities, opting in for periodic project updates, and requesting a copy of the final report.

Limitations

In collecting a convenience sample, we were able to learn from the survivors who heard about our project and wanted to talk with us. We worked to disseminate information about the project through multiple channels to help ensure that a diverse sample of survivors received information about the opportunity to speak with us. It is reasonable to assume that those survivors who chose not to speak with us had different experiences and perspectives. We anticipate that survivors who had negative experiences with domestic violence programs in the past would likely be among those who would choose not to speak with us.

Recruitment notices and project information described our interest in hearing from "survivors of domestic violence." Though there are broader, more inclusive terms for this social problem, we chose the descriptor "domestic violence" because we believed it to be the most generally used and recognized term in Indiana communities. Recruitment materials did not define domestic violence or include any specific criteria, but allowed individuals to define and determine their own experience. Though many survivors spoke of experiences of emotional, psychological, social, economic and sexual abuse, we recognize that with the use of the term, "violence," it is possible that individuals who had experienced forms of abuse other than physical violence would have self-selected out, believing that their experiences weren't relevant to our inquiry.

In reviewing the sample, we recognize that we heard from "leavers"—those survivors who had separated from the abusive relationship(s) that they discussed in their interview. The use of the term, "survivors" of domestic violence in recruitment materials could have reinforced the sense that we were only interested in hearing from individuals who had ended or separated from an abusive relationship. Though we did hear from survivors who expressed a sense of loss over ending the abusive relationship (and these feelings were among the things that survivors said they felt they needed to hide when seeking support/services), none of the survivors that we interviewed reported the decision to remain in the relationship. We know that for many survivors, ending the relationship will never be the most feasible or desirable solution. We did not get advice about the best sources of community and service support for survivors who stay in the conflicted relationship. This remains an important area for inquiry as we work to build supports that are relevant and responsive across a broad range of life circumstances and survivor choices.

Findings

With 91 individual interviews and five focus groups, we had over 1000 pages of data to review and report. This volume of information necessitated strategic decisions about the depth of reporting that we would provide in each topic area. We have worked to organize and depict our findings in ways that can facilitate responsive action among domestic violence programs, organizational partners and the broader public. Though all of our findings are summarized in composite form, with the narrative descriptions, we focus on the topics according to these priorities:

- We report on recommendations that were most frequently mentioned by survivors.
- With regard to our cohort's focus on the needs of survivors facing the greatest barriers to services, we prioritize strategies for increasing access and inclusion in our communities.
- We prioritize the discussion of recommendations that point us towards service changes and/or the development of new programs. Less space is dedicated to describing programs that are currently underway and working well.

Priorities for safety and wellbeing that survivors described include many opportunities for action in the community and within service agencies. To inform training, education and social marketing strategies, we report on survivors' experiences in reaching out for assistance, who they are reaching out to, the barriers that make it difficult to seek support, characteristics of responses that were helpful, and the types of responses that were harmful. Finally, though our inquiry was focused on survivors' needs, we also wanted to get their advice about how communities should hold individuals who use abuse accountable for that behavior; we briefly summarize those findings here.

Safety & Wellbeing

In this area, we summarize the conditions and qualities that survivors said they need in order to have safe and satisfying lives. Responses ranged from community-level systems and norms, to relationship skills and qualities, to individual level practices and components of a positive sense of self. Discussion of prominent themes with illustrative quotes are provided for each action area.

Community/Society		Relationships	Individual Needs
Structural/Systemic protections (269)	**Cultural/Normative Protections (142)**		
1. Stable basics (95) • Housing (59) • Healthcare (15) • Food security (8) • Transportation (6) • Other resources (donations, furniture, etc) (5) • Childcare (2) 2. Financial security (70) • Sustainable employment (43) • Expanded eligibility for social safety net programs (27) 3. Greater access to social service programs (31) • Increased number of social service programs (25) • Increased accessibility to resources & programs for individuals with disabilities (7) 4. Safe neighborhoods (30) 5. Security/Surveillance (24) 6. Community activities and opportunities for engagement (19)	1. Compassionate, informed response to domestic violence (DV) (99) • Awareness of DV dynamics and prevalence (39) • Non-judgmental attitudes about survivors' experiences and decisions (33) • Knowledge of community resources (28) 2. Connected, caring community where neighbors look out for one another (27) 3. Inclusive, non-discriminatory environments (8) 4. Norms that are intolerant of violence (5) 5. Norms that support help-seeking (3)	1. Strong support system (47) • Family (18) • Friends (16) • General support (13) 2. Safe, respectful relationships (44) 3. Self-determination, self-expression supported (18) 4. Being alone (3)	1. Feeling strong, empowered (23) 2. Having a positive sense of self (13) 3. Having animals/ pets (2)

Structural/Systemic Protections: Responses related to public systems, structures, investment and policies.

1. Stable basics

Survivors needed to have confidence that their basic needs, and their children's needs, would be met in order to feel safe. The need most often described was stable housing. Other prominent needs included healthcare, food security and transportation.

Stable housing: Housing was the primary need that survivors identified in the context of safety. They told us that the risk of homelessness was a major barrier to ending an abusive relationship, and that finding sustainable housing remained a concern after the decision to separate. In discussing housing, survivors told us that they needed affordable housing options and that they needed housing that felt safe and secure. Survivors wanted to feel safe within their homes, and within their neighborhoods; for some, feelings of safety relied on security measures like surveillance systems or secured buildings.

> *Shelter matters. But you can't stay there forever. It's very, it's like jumping off a cliff, I think, to go from a women's shelter, then where do you go?*
>
> *...a place where I feel secure, protected...*
>
> *I need a house really bad because I lost my place for him. I lost everything for him.*
>
> *Having a place to live. It's very difficult to find a place to rent if you have kids. Because if you have a couple of kids, then you can only find a one bedroom or two-bedroom house. And then you have to have money up front. You have to have a deposit, you have to have the first month's rent. Well, if I just left, I don't have any money. That was a big thing that I feel like that would be one reason I would ended up staying because I didn't have somewhere.*

Healthcare: Access to appropriate healthcare services was a critical component of safety and recovery for survivors and their children. The need for mental health services, including addiction treatment programs, was the most frequently identified area of need. Survivors told us that they need healthcare services to be available to them (they noted that programs and providers often have lengthy waiting lists), and also affordable. They were concerned about costs, and their eligibility for insurance programs.

> *Therapy, therapy would have been great. Free, honestly free, therapy or something like income-based therapy or knowing of it. I didn't know about it if it does exist. That would have been something. Something that was specifically for trauma, not just going to a therapist.*
>
> *I'm just kind of feeling vulnerable lately because I'm going to be losing my insurance through my mother in like three months and I currently can't work full time because I'm a student...I have a lot of stuff wrong with me. So, I don't really know what I'm going to be doing at that point.*
>
> *...there's rehabs here in town but I can't go to them without money...*

Food security: Concerns about hunger compromised survivors' feelings of safety. In order to feel food secure, they needed to have sufficient income/benefits to afford food as well as access to groceries and supplemental resources like food pantries.

> *I feel safe now, so the way that looks is stability. Having a job and housing and food, and then just being more aware of resources and what to do if God forbid this would ever happen again.*
>
> *Food, strange as that might sound.*

Transportation: Reliable transportation was described as a necessary component of safety. Survivors needed reliable transportation in order to work and to access critical services and resources. This need was most prominent for survivors with mobility-related disabilities and those living in rural areas without public transportation systems. This need was further described by survivors in response to our questions about forms of assistance that they wanted from domestic violence programs (see discussion in the "DV Programs and services for survivors" section below).

> *Transportation is something that I struggled with. An example is when my son was sick and the bus wasn't running. There was nowhere within walking distance to get medicine and I couldn't afford a taxi. I was blessed to have a friend willing to go get it and bring it to me, but that didn't always work out.*
>
> *Knowing that a provider will have a staff that I can trust and that way we can go to my appointments or go shopping or whatever I need to do, like going to the bank if I need to.*

2. Financial Security

Survivors described financial insecurity as one of the most significant barriers that they faced in their efforts to separate from an abusive relationship and to rebuild safe lives for themselves and their children. Two main areas of need survivors discussed included the need for sustainable employment and social safety net programs.

> *The biggest risk factor for women is financial instability.*
>
> *This month has been three years, and it's been a constant up and down roller coaster emotionally. I can't get myself stabilized as far as financially.*

Sustainable employment: For survivors, getting and keeping good jobs was a critical strategy for financial security, and for establishing social connections and a normal routine. But for many, financial abuse experienced during the relationship resulted in limited work and educational histories, constraining their abilities to earn a living wage after separating from the relationship. Other survivors faced limited work opportunities because of their immigration status or because of prior criminal convictions. When discussing work, survivors emphasized the need for jobs that paid a living wage, and that were both flexible (allowing missed time for legal, medical and therapeutic appointments for the survivor and their children) and responsive (supporting safety, and also compassion for their feelings) to their experiences of abuse.

Training & skill development:

Coming out of the abusive situation, you lose all of your safety net. Most of us were not employed. And unfortunately, most of us now don't have much of an education. So you have babies and if you stay, your babies are fed but you're beat. If you leave, your babies are hungry but you're safe. There's not a very good option. So being able to empower these women that there are places that will employ them to take care of their families.

Skills are being lost among survivors of violence, because they aren't able to work and perform according to their abilities. They have skills, but not consistent work histories. Maybe they haven't been able to complete their degrees, but they have so many life skills, wisdom and talents. Need more places for people to network and to find opportunities to use those skills.

Work eligibility:

I wish that I could have permission for work, social security number or a green card.

I had no decent job because of what's on my background. Everybody looking like that on my background. If they saw that, no one would hire you, 'cause this is on your background.

Living wage:

As a single woman, it's particularly hard to earn a living wage. Especially if you are experiencing violence. I could go to a shelter, and they would provide me with 6 weeks of help, but what do I do then—because I don't earn a living wage. I'm just going to have to become homeless again. I have to leave Indiana to move back to where I have a support network for the difficult times because there is no financial safety.

I'm having to pay for anything the kids need to try and keep things as normal as possible...like I think sometimes when you're not making minimum wage, it sounds like, oh, that's a pretty good salary. Well, when you look at three kids and you look at housing and you look at the whole picture and all the court fees and lawyer fees up to that point, it's overwhelming to think, oh my gosh, where am I going to come up with that?

Job security: supportive, flexible workplace

I had all I could do to hold down a part-time job and deal with my depression. And you know thankfully I had a very forgiving employer, who didn't mind if I worked from home but I mean, if I had to go out right away immediately and get a full-time job, if my ex-husband hadn't taken me in and given me that support, I probably would have ended up homeless after that because I had all I could do to keep it together.

We need something similar to FMLA [Family Medical Leave Act] that would allow survivors to go to appointments having to do with therapy, doctors, court, and you can take that time off of work without getting punished. I'm not saying that you're going to get paid for that time away, you just don't lose your job.

I think job security helps a lot. Knowing that I'm going to continue to have a job, and so I'm going to continue to, not have to worry about how I'm going to provide for my kids, or where we're going to live, and feeling safe at my job, too.

Expanded eligibility for social safety net programs: Survivors described the need for expanded social safety net programs to help protect them through the financial vulnerability of separating from their abusive relationship. Survivors expressed the need for more financial and service supports, for expanded income eligibility levels to enable supports for survivors who have some income or assets, and also, to allow eligibility for survivors with felony records.

More financial and programmatic supports

> *I guess just feeling like there was more safety nets in general. It's not easy to feel vulnerable and not be able to anticipate what's going to happen in the future.*
>
> *Definitely have there be more resources for things that are more expensive such as legal and mental health available to people that can't afford it."*

Expanded income eligibility for safety net programs

> Really, the biggest part was just trying to get housing, trying to find a job, and there was no one to help with those resources unless you want to quit your job and they will give you housing. Or if I went to quit my job, they were going to get me day care. Well, why do I need day care if I'm not working? But to have a job, I couldn't get day care. It just felt like they're setting you up for failure to go right back because at least then you had money and you had the ability to take care of your kids. So you were setting us up to go right back to where we came from and make zero progress.
>
> I was told when I left, and I had a fast food job making minimum wage if I would quit my job, I could get services. But if I stayed employed, I couldn't have anything. That's ridiculous.
>
> I felt like I wished I could be in a worse position you know, like I wish like okay maybe I should quit my job and then I could get more assistance . . . so I felt like, yeah, if I made myself even less stable then I could get help.

Safety net eligibility for survivors with felony records

Survivors with felony records face greater barriers to separating from an abusive relationship and creating financial stability because of limited eligibility for work and safety net programs.

> *I have drug-related felonies so I can't get housing or any type of housing assistance because of that. It just limits lots of things.*

Safe neighborhoods: Living in environments that felt safe allowed survivors to relax and to participate; safe neighborhoods contributed to their mental, physical and social health. Elements of neighborhood safety that survivors described included environments free from all forms of violence, community connectedness, and structures (lights, sidewalks) and systems (neighborhood watch programs) that support feelings of security.

Violence-free environments

> *A safe life would just be about having an environment where you feel a sense of protection for yourself and your children, that's what a safe environment is. You feel comfortable in doing your day to day activities without the threat of fear.*
>
> *Basically feeling safe in my home, in my neighborhood, and in my general community .*
>
> *Not being afraid of leaving your door open, of being in the yard, being completely at peace with my babies.*

Community connectedness

> *Being in a community where there's people around I know that care. Family, friends, community members, that's all part of feeling safe.*

Security Measures:

> *In my other neighborhood I used to live in, they had cameras in the neighborhood that you could tell were working because they were flashing. And light in the neighborhood, in front of your door. I had to advocate for myself for my neighborhood to put in the light, when the old light went out and they didn't want to fix it, I went to higher level to advocate for that because I didn't feel safe.*
>
> *I think more of like neighborhood watches in every neighborhood.*

3. Greater access to social service programs:

Survivors were appreciative of social service programs and thought that they were fundamental for rebuilding their lives after experiences of abuse. Though they appreciate and rely on these programs, survivors wanted both more programs and expanded services in order to meet their needs.

More programs: Survivors thought that communities needed to invest in more social service programs. They observed that many shelters (domestic violence programs, and homeless programs) are operating at capacity. When shelters are full, survivors are stuck. Additionally, they wanted more programs supporting sufficiency (donations and materials support) and recovery (therapeutic programs). Finally, they wanted more compassionate points of entry to get survivors connected with relevant community resources and supports (a "safe place" model for adults in need of support).

> *You feel like the situation is hopeless and you feel like, 'I am just going to stay with him, nobody is helping me.' You know, if you had more people to turn to, because I think sometimes even when people have shelters they are full the majority of the time. And so that may be their last hope. So that shelter is full. What do you think they are going to do? They are going to turn around and go back. This is something that is going to happen.*

Expanded, inclusive services and scheduling: Survivors appreciated restorative programs and supports, but were concerned that accessibility to these programs was limited—because of scheduling, but also because of physical barriers and identity-based exclusion. Survivors need support groups, therapy appointments and other supports to be offered "after hours" so that they can attend to their recovery while maintaining their employment. They also need programs to focus on inclusion by addressing physical barriers, attending to language access and by addressing discriminatory behaviors and practices.

> *"It's Legacy [House], and they're wonderful. They have a children's program. By the time my kids get off school and get down there, they close at five, and an hour away. I guess I just need more programs.*
>
> *I feel like there's no support for people with disabilites...People need to be more receptive of situations where disability comes into play with access to buildings... Also, removing barriers for using the bathroom including signage that shows respect for those who are trans."*

Security/Surveillance: Survivors discussed the need to feel safe and secure in their homes and also in community settings like service agencies, the workplace and places of worship. Elements of security related to housing survivors identified included alarm systems, new locks, and secure buildings with locked doors, cameras and security staff. In community settings, survivors appreciated having people who were looking out for them—be they formal security staff, or just organizational members who were keeping an eye out for them, and holding people accountable for inappropriate behaviors.Though safety for most survivors centered on community safety and social support, a few also mentioned that access to tools for personal protection like cellphones, pepper spray, protective animals, or firearms contributed to their feelings of safety.

> *"Having a building were you have to be buzzed in, and someone just can't come to, like, your door, and kick it in. I believe, for women, married or single, but mostly single women, I think they need a more secure network around. There's not enough buzzing apartments. I mean, if you live in a house, some people can't afford it, but if you could afford... I don't know what they're called, but the alarm systems."*

Community activities and opportunities for engagement: Survivors said that they wanted more low or no-cost opportunities to be active in their communities and to engage with their neighbors. They said that these events contributed to their kids' happiness, to their sense of social support and also to their mental health. Interest areas included health fairs, nature-related activities and events related to the arts; activities for children was a top priority.

> *"They had like free face painting and free bouncy houses and stuff like that and free food. And so it brought people who probably normally wouldn't go to certain community events together. And to me that is, you know creating more of that foundation more of that community involvement and community unity.*
>
> *I think organizations need to collaborate more on just doing events in the park or in different areas of the city to get people out, meeting new people, doing things to get you out of your comfort zone. But doing more events around the city and maybe they can be a small fee, maybe they can be free, it just depends on what resources are available but just doing more events because it's really hard to just find things going on in your city. I think that helps with depression and anxiety, getting out of the house and just doing something, going to the park. I think activity means a lot."*

Cultural/Normative Protections

In this section we move from the resources and material sources of support that survivors needed to focus on communities' social and normative responses to violence. In this area, survivors described the kind of support that they hoped for in the context of disclosure, but also how they wanted community members to treat one another, more broadly, to foster safety and wellbeing.

1. Compassionate, informed response to domestic violence

Survivors' stories in this area indicated that where the dynamics of domestic violence are broadly understood, the stigma, shame and secrecy surrounding relationship violence would be greatly reduced, and help seeking behaviors would be supported. Key strategies identified included increasing community awareness of domestic violence, addressing judgment and stigma related to survivors' experiences and broadly disseminating information about domestic violence services and programs.

Awareness of DV dynamics and prevalence: Survivors told us that they wanted the general public to understand the dynamics of domestic violence in order to normalize the problem, and also to validate a broad range of survivors' decisions about their experiences. They told us that community silence on the subject made them feel like they were alone and isolated in their experiences. Areas for awareness included prevalence statistics, information about all forms of abuse (not just physical violence) and their impacts, barriers to ending a relationship and reasons why survivors may choose to return to the relationship. Survivors believed that with greater awareness of the dynamics of the problem, community members would be better equipped to provide them with informed, compassionate responses.

> *"I think it needs to be talked about more. I think that to make like an awareness campaign all over not just on days that people have died or one day a year. No, it needs to be talked about and talked about over and over and over.*
>
> *Let people know that it's not their fault, they don't deserve it, and there is help and hope. There is always someone out there going through, or that has been in a similar situation, who will help you and talk to you.*
>
> *I know in my situation my mom wasn't really aware of like, you know, statistical things about like, you know, abuse since they normally return seven times before they leave. And so that was, kind of, frustrating for her but maybe if she had more information about it, she would, kind of, understand a little bit better."*

Survivors in one of the focus group conversations observed that the nature of awareness events was very important. They indicated that events organized around stories of injury and/or domestic violence-related deaths could be re-traumatizing for survivors and could deter engagement among the broader public. They encourage programs to use more positive messages promoting safe and respectful relationships.

Non-judgmental attitudes about survivors' experiences and decisions: For the survivors we spoke with, awareness raising was directly related to reducing stigma and judgment. By raising awareness about the prevalence and dynamics of the problem, they hoped to reduce the shame that survivors feel about their own experiences, but also the judgment that they face with disclosure. The problem of judgment was a consistent theme that surfaced in response to our questions about safety, and in our questions about negative interventions. Survivors reported experiences of judgment from within their social networks, but also from service providers across professions.

The cultural framework of judgment was so strong, that survivors were made to feel foolish about

their decisions in all directions—those who experienced physical violence reported that they were judged for staying in the relationship, those who experienced emotional abuse were judged for not just "dealing with it." Survivors told us that they encountered judgment in response to their experiences of abuse, but also in circumstances related to the abuse including their children's behavior, mental health challenges, addictions and poverty. Fear of judgment made it much harder for survivors to reach out for support, and negative interactions caused them to lose faith in systems and people.

> *"I would have felt more comfortable reaching out if I felt confident that there are people, who, for the most part, would understand. Wouldn't ask shaming questions.*
>
> *I just feel like there needs to be so much more education about it and there's a lot of blame that people still put on the victim. Well, if you didn't like it, you should have left or you're stupid for going back, which only makes you feel more like crap and then you are definitely not gonna get away. So, I felt like I didn't really get any support from my family or my friends, really. Because they couldn't understand. They couldn't reason it out. They couldn't rationalize my decisions. They couldn't. They just didn't understand.*
>
> *I think that that is something that people, if we have programs, that could allow people to come in and not be judged. That is the whole thing. When you're dealing with someone who's been through abuse, you always feel judged. You always feel ashamed. You always feel embarrassed. So, if there was something that says, hey, let's get you empowered, let's get you whole.*
>
> *Society looks down on you—think that you should be punished for your inability to succeed."*

Knowledge of community resources: Accessing services can be both emotionally and logistically daunting; survivors encourage us to facilitate help seeking by broadly disseminating information about domestic violence programs and services. They say that it is easier for survivors to recognize that they have options when resource information is easily accessible for them, and for the friends and family that they reach out to for support. In order to access support services, survivors indicated that they need to know what services are available, how they work and what they need to do to access them.

Survivors encourage us to place service information in a broad range of public places — grocery stores, libraries, gas stations, dollar stores, gyms, salons, schools, public buildings, churches, etc. to ensure that survivors from many different walks of life have access to the information. They also suggest that programs publicize resources over television, radio and social media. This information needs to be provided with sensitivity to language and cultural accessibility.

> *"The person that's in danger or being abused or in a bad relationship, they're so withdrawn and hidden. And no matter how visible that organization is, I guess that person still might not see it. So I guess that's really just finding different people, places that can make that message clear and visible . . .*
>
> *I know there for a while in restrooms there used to be like a card. I think those were very nice, because you could hide those and it kind of gives you some ideas if you need to get away, what steps you should kind of follow."*

2. Connected, caring community:

In discussing the characteristics of communities that could support their safety and wellbeing, survivors emphasized the importance of community members proactively checking in when they think that someone may be struggling, but they also focused on supporting connected infrastructures to help prevent violence. Discussions of proactively checking in centered on knowing community members, caring about their wellbeing, and having the skills/feeling socially supported in checking in during times of trouble. The need to care and check in was discussed in the context of domestic violence, but also with other social concerns including depression and suicide. In describing protective communities that can help to prevent violence, survivors pointed to the importance of connective programs like neighborhood associations and watch programs.

> *They need guidance, resources. It takes time. Lots of people get out and are homeless, broke, unsupported, jobless, etc. We need to help them plan. We need to guide them out, not push them out. Lots of people will feel torn about coming out of the relationship because they don't want to be alone. We need a sisterhood and brotherhood.*
>
> *And being in a community where there's people around I know that care. Family, friends, community members, that's all part of feeling safe.*
>
> *A good neighborhood watch is an excellent program. It really is because it also kind of brings the neighbors together.*

3. Inclusive, non-discriminatory environments

For many survivors, particularly those from identity groups that have been marginalized, feelings of safety required living in inclusive community environments. Indicators of this included the absence of hate speech and other discriminatory behaviors, but also the presence of programs and opportunities that were supportive of their interests and needs.

> *Just being ok where you are at in the skin that you are living in. It is like, you know, not worrying about traumatic events happening . . .*
>
> *He's a Trans young man, still in high school but he does drag. And he said that he often doesn't feel safe at his high school and not even just with an intimate partner, just in general because his otherness is so hard to understand for teenagers.*
>
> *I am Hispanic does not mean my daughter is not a citizen. In a certain way, there is some kind of racism there.*

4. Norms that deter violence and support help-seeking

Survivors told us that establishing norms that are intolerant of abusive behavior (inclusive of domestic violence and other forms of aggression) and that support equitable behavior would contribute to community safety. They believe that norms that are supportive of help seeking would help people to build safe and satisfying lives.

> *Because I feel like that's a big thing with my daughter now. I try to show her that her friends aren't supposed to walk all over her, her friends aren't supposed to be mean to her. They're supposed to be nice and sharing and be there for you because I don't want her to grow up and think, 'Well, my friends are supposed to treat me like that, then my boyfriend is supposed to treat me like that.'*

> *I'd love to see a culture where a teenage boy makes a joke about a woman, that his buddies go, hey, that's not cool, knock it off. Really. That's a big thing to say is change the entire culture. When you start with boys and you teach them the proper way to behave, then that's how they become men who know how to behave. It's so much more possible than taking a man who's already an abuser and already has this ingrained behavior patterns, and trying to change that. Then also, get it out there and get it known, get it preached from pulpits and put on TV, and just everywhere that this isn't okay.*
>
> *I think that an overall, like, if society were more accepting of psychological services, I think that would be the biggest thing ever. Because since I had been going to therapy for two years, now I can start to notice like things that are hurting other people and bothering other people that they're not getting help for and no one's out there encouraging people to go get help. Like there's such a negative stigma about psychological help. So, I feel like for the world to be a happier, better place in my eyes, like more people would be getting help because I see so many people suffer when they don't have to. It's really sad... So, I think like just educating the public more about therapy and psychological issues and getting help. That would make the world a better place for everybody.*

Safety and Wellbeing in Relationships

Many survivors defined their sense of safety in the context of relationships. In order to feel safe, survivors wanted to have strong, connected relationships with their intimate partners, but also more broadly with family, friends and community members.

> *A safe life would be filled with people who are good for me to be around... Life is basically made up of people, relationships, so I would think that would be the best way.*

1. Support systems

For survivors who had experienced isolation in the context of relationship abuse, there was immense value in the ability to engage in supportive relationships with a range of people. They described the importance of these connections for day-to-day social support, and also for when they needed assistance in times of adversity or crisis. Friends and family were the most frequently identified sources of social support, but survivors also relied on relationships with their faith communities, neighbors and colleagues.

> *. . . the normalcy of being able to get up, go to work try to have a professional career, going to church, doing things with family, that created a sense of normalcy for me that also created a sense of safety for me when I could be able to do those normal things.*
>
> *A good support system for if something does happen or go wrong in anything. Having a good support system helps me feel safe.*
>
> *Having support from family and friends to meet that safety, having someone that you can confide in and rely on.*
>
> *I know all my neighbors.*

2. Safe, respectful relationships

Survivors told us that they wanted safety and respect in all of their close relationships—those with intimate partners and those with friends and family. In describing these relationships, some survivors focused on the absence of violence and fear. Others described the positive behaviors that they wanted in their closest relationships.

> *Being confident that no one is going to hurt me physically, sexually, emotionally, mentally. So just not being hurt.*
>
> *. . . a quiet life with my children and no violence .*
>
> *I have a pretty strong family support. My parents are very active in our lives as a great support system and we rely on each other to build each other out.*
>
> *I am in a healthy relationship with another person who isn't perfect but I can go to him and share with him and we can disagree about things and that's ok but we still move forward.*
>
> *Obviously healthy, everybody happy, communication, boundaries, guidelines.*

3. Self-determination supported

Because so many survivors experienced multiple mechanisms of control during their abusive relationship(s), self-determination was a priority for feelings of safety. Components of self-determination that survivors described included having the freedom to make decisions, and the ability to live in authentic ways, without fear of retribution related to their opinions or identities.

> *It would mean that I am no longer manipulated and controlled.*
>
> *I just think when you feel secure in your home. For me it's not just having locks on the doors and things like that. But internally, being comfortable, where you don't have to walk on eggshells all the time. Where you can be who you are as a person, and not fear retribution in any way.*
>
> *. . . knowing that I'm coming home to someone who respect my personal boundaries, my privacy, my social life, and me, respects me.*

4. Being alone

A few survivors indicated that after multiple experiences of abusive and exploitive relationships they had concluded that, for them, safety relied on minimally engaging with other people. They described the intention to avoid future intimate relationships.

> *I quit dating. I've known what love was and I've had kids, but I decided I didn't want -- within the third date, you got a guy telling you what to do, and this and that, and women, the same thing. But it was like, 'You know what? I'm done with this'.*

Individual Needs

At the individual level, survivors' sense of safety relied on feeling capable to manage their own lives and the systems that the needed to engage with, and also with feeling good about themselves.

1. Feeling empowered

Survivors told us that feeling empowered was important for a safe and satisfying life. Components of empowerment included feeling strong and confident in their abilities to manage their lives, and having the freedom to make decisions. Survivors frequently used the term "free" to describe how they felt—free to have a social life, free to have opinions, free to work and take care of their family's business. For some survivors, opportunities to "give back" by volunteering contributed to feelings of empowerment.

> *. . . so that creates a sense of safety, knowing that now I'm strong, really strong.*
>
> *Being in control of my life and my employment.*
>
> *Feeling free to have a social life and have normal freedoms that people have.*
>
> *Safety comes from helping others, volunteering.*

2. Having a positive sense of self

For many survivors, establishing a safe and satisfying life meant overcoming feelings of self-blame related to the abuse and regaining a positive sense of self. Survivors described the importance of sustaining feelings of wellbeing by engaging in self-care practices.

> *You know just I think one of the things that was really hard for me was like I just had zero access to self-care for so long you know. I just did without for so many years and so if there is a way to provide more resources like that for people it could be great.*
>
> *There was this museum like near my campus at school and they did art. They did art, so I used it as a tool to do art therapy for myself. Now, I'm just painting these different pieces of abstract and putting words in the middle of the abstract like love, peace, survive or just strong words that help me motivate myself to continue to move forward.*
>
> *Meditation. Closeness to God.*

Domestic Violence Programs and Services

When asked what type of resources they would design for survivors of abuse, respondents described a range of programs and resources to support survivors and their children. They also discussed the importance of conducting domestic violence training with community partners and promoting systems alignment to facilitate the delivery of competent and empathetic services as survivors engage with multiple agencies across their experiences of abuse and recovery.

DV programs & services for survivors (218)	Services for children (65)	Services in the community (98)
1. Support systems (98) • Support groups (33) • Therapeutic supports (25) • Survivor mentors (23) • Post-program exit supports (9) • Opportunities for self-care (8) 2. Safe place/Shelter (27) 3. Life skills development & planning (23) • Employment assistance (10) • General skill development (9) • Educational assistance (3) • Financial planning (1) 4. Financial/material support (17) 5. Legal assistance (17) 6. Safety strategies (10) 7. Housing assistance (9) 8. Transportation assistance (7) 9. Childcare (4) 10. Relationship skill development (3) • Parenting Support (2) • Healthy relationship education (1) 11. Pet services (2) 12. Storage (1)	1. Support systems (46) • Therapeutic supports (30) • Support groups (9) • Mentors (4) • School-based support (3) 2. Programs and activities (19) • Life skills training—managing money, cooking, etc • Provide kids with a voice/ empowerment	1. DV education (46) • Prevention education for youth (20) • Education for professionals (18) • Education for families/ support people (8) 2. Coordination (25) • Resource information hub (18) • Coordinated service delivery (7) 3. Outreach (14) 4. Access to a DV advocate (13)

Domestic Violence Programs and Services for Survivors

1. Support systems

Survivors told us that they wanted more sources of support—across their experiences of recovery. They observed that intensive supports were often available immediately following experiences of abuse, but that the availability of those tended to trail off over time. Survivors described a range of support options including therapy, activities to promote and practice self-care, mentoring programs and support groups. Survivors said that they wanted support from service providers, but they also encouraged providers to create programs to facilitate the exchange of support among peers.

Support groups: Survivors deeply appreciated support groups. They described groups as helpful for addressing the isolation that they felt. They took comfort in the ability to share their personal stories, and they found the encouragement that they received from peers who had "been there" to be most credible.

Survivors wanted support groups to be accessible and inclusive. They told us that groups needed to be widely available—both in shelter and in the community; similarly, they wanted groups offered at a variety of times to accommodate their schedules and even suggested the creation of online group options. They encouraged us to think about where groups are publicized (to reach people across diverse identity groups and also to reach survivors that did not use other shelter services) and convened in order to foster participation among survivors from many different walks of life.

> *"But that support group for me, I don't have to explain nothing, everybody on that understands what's going on, is just nice.*
>
> *Talking about, you know, the abuse and thinking about how it affected me and my kids and talking with other people who'd been through that.*
>
> *I think sometimes domestic violence, that sense of isolation continues. And I don't know if there's a way to create community for survivors that is not necessarily tied to going to a shelter or a facility. Something you know, I don't know, support groups that are more community anchored instead of you know being so much like one of the shelters. Just help connecting to other people with that shared lived experience, so that you know, it kind of facilitates those conversations and sometimes it feels like I'm the only one because people don't talk about it."*

Therapeutic supports: For many survivors, therapeutic supports were a critical component of services and recovery. Survivors told us that they need counseling programs to be available (waiting lists were cited as a concern) and affordable. They also indicated the need for therapists with expertise in violence, trauma and addictions.

> *"I think everybody should, regardless of the ability to pay in any situation, have a right to counseling if they're a victim of a crime or trauma.*
>
> *. . . offering counseling services. Not everyone has insurance and not everyone can pay. Extremely discounted or even free services.*
>
> *I could also say more immediate therapy options. I feel like there's too long of a wait period for people who are needing counseling to be able to get into that when the crisis is happening now.*
>
> *. . . having access to therapy and counseling and trauma related therapy."*

Survivor mentors: Creating survivor mentor programs was a recommendation that came up repeatedly in the survivor interviews and focus group discussions. In the process of recovery over time, survivors wanted one-on-one support from peers who had recovered from experiences of domestic violence. In describing the benefits of this approach, survivors indicated that mentors with lived experience of domestic violence could bring particular knowledge, credibility and non-judgment in supporting survivors.

In describing the benefits of peer mentors, survivors said that we were well-positioned to help them see that they are not alone in their experiences, to understand the dynamics of abusive relationships; and to help survivors to navigate recovery systems. Because they had also, "been there," survivors felt confident that they wouldn't feel judged by a survivor mentor, and that they would trust their advice. Finally, they indicated that the survivor mentor's success was a powerful demonstration that recovery was possible.

> *Having someone that's already been through it. That would have been the biggest help. They know the feelings about why they stayed or why they left. They have more understanding of what you are going through.*
>
> *Someone to help walk you through the process. Without it you kind of feel like you're walking through the forest.*
>
> *She kind of gave me her story. It always is horrible to think that you feel glad that somebody else has been there. It's awful that they were there. But it makes you feel better to know that you're not the only one, because that's the way you feel.*
>
> *I also think a mentor program is huge to put a victim off to a survivor, somebody who's thriving and doing well to show them that there is a light because they don't see it for a long time.*

Survivors told us that mentors with personal experiences of abuse brought a sort of legitimacy that was different from that provided by advocates and other professional helpers.

> *I want someone that understands me, not someone that is analyzing me.*
>
> *To talk to people who know what you've been through, that helps. Somebody who built their self. Somebody who textbook been through it but don't understand. You know? Believe me, I'm not throwing sarcasm or nothing, but unless you walk in their shoes. . . you can't get how we feel. So if you gonna give us counselling, let it be from someone who been through it.*

Post-exit supports: Though they appreciated the intensive services provided to them at the time of crisis, survivors wanted supportive services and relationships with providers to be extended across the recovery period. Some survivors expressed concern that they wouldn't be permitted to interact with the program or staff subsequent to exiting the program. Others believed that it wouldn't be appropriate to contact the program back for support unless their circumstances had again risen to the level of crisis. Some survivors wanted domestic violence program staff to proactively follow up with them, on occasion, to let them know that they care about them and remain available if they want support.

> *I wish there was more support for every day stuff. I'm extremely grateful for all of the crisis assistance. The help with moving, there's a whole team from the church that came and helped me move, and we got it all done. But it's like the everyday, day to day stuff that I know that people who haven't been there, they have no idea how exhausting it is – and lonely.*

> *I don't know if it's more time or something available where we could meet up, you know, outside [the domestic violence program] or just in living life day to day. I guess I know you can call here like if you're in crisis mode, but I think sometimes there were just bad days and it wasn't necessarily like a crisis mode, but just needing to talk about this or maybe get perspective.*
>
> *Im scared right now, that when I leave and when I have my own place, I'm scared that I'm probably never going to see you guys and I have to stay away from you guys until probably I don't feel safe anymore.*

Opportunities for self-care: Many survivors were denied the ability to think about their own needs during their experiences of abuse. For these survivors, opportunities to practice self-care were a critical part of recovery—providing them with the space to build themselves back up and to make important decisions for their future.

> *And so really helping out people, helping that person know their worth, learning their strengths, attain their goals, be physically well, take care of their selves and learning to love.*
>
> *You know just I think one of the things that was really hard for me was like I just had zero access to self-care for so long, you know. I just did without for so many years and so if there is a way to provide more resources like that for people it could be great.*

2. Safe place/shelter

Survivors described the importance of protected places, where they could go for immediate physical safety, and also to be able to make decisions about their future. For some this included emergency shelter, for others, it meant a safe, supportive place to talk with an advocate without using housing services.

In describing their needs around emergency shelter, survivors said that they needed programs to have sufficient capacity and cultural competence to serve them well. In terms of capacity, they indicated that emergency shelter space needed to be available in lots of communities, and that shelters needed to have enough beds to meet the community's needs without imposing timelines on residents. In terms of cultural competence, survivors told us that shelters needed to create safe, inclusive environments to ensure that survivors from different backgrounds would feel safe and welcomed. They recommended training staff to address implicit bias, having plans for language access, and also displaying multicultural art and providing culturally diverse food choices. More details about survivors' positive and negative experiences with domestic violence programs are provided in the **Intervention** section beginning on **page 45.**

> *I think the very first thing you have to do is actually get safe right, like you have to actually get to a place where you can be safe.*
>
> *For the abused ,you know, maybe have a place for them to go that is safe where they can get away from the abuser.*
>
> *In making something it would be like a safe place they can come to in all areas.*

3. Life skills development and planning

Survivors told us that life skills development and planning were important services for domestic violence programs to provide. Many survivors told us that they had been denied opportunities to work, to seek education or training, to manage money, or to participate in household decision-making. They didn't have experience or practice with many types of responsibilities. These survivors wanted advocates to assist them in developing plans for the future, practicing skills, and in accessing systems of support.

> *Meeting with the advocates and just kind of, you know, having a plan for the future.*
>
> *Maybe there's also training on how to get to school, how to get a job, how to do a resume, how to get your GED. Like all of these involve community partnerships.*
>
> *Learning to be independent and being able to do a hundred percent of everything on your own, whether that's fixing your dishwasher that took you three weeks or just figuring, like, maybe you didn't manage the money before and you have no idea what to do. I think things like that would be helpful. Just little things like realizing how often you should change your lightbulbs, you know, or do you have smoke detectors? Just things that allow you to be safe that maybe you never thought of before.*

4 Financial and material support

Survivors told us that they had limited resources and lots of financial concerns. Many had been unable to work, or had lost employment in the course of separating from the relationship. Some had incurred debt during the abusive relationship; they also faced medical and legal costs related to the violence that they had experienced. For these survivors, temporary assistance with basic needs—including transportation costs, food assistance, emergency housing alternatives to shelter, relocation costs, furniture and supplies to set up a new household—were essential for establishing independent lives. They also appreciated financial and material assistance for their families at the holidays. Survivors wanted financial supports like these to be available for all survivors—not limited to those who used emergency shelter.

> *It's the basics. It's the basics. You need rides places...there needs to be money to get IDs, birth certificates, someone to help you do jobs, to know where jobs are, stuff like that. I mean, it's not easy, you know, when you have to walk across town and you have no money.*
>
> *They had clothes like a boutique for us women to go down to. It's all donated stuff. But for someone like me who just showed up with what she had on her back, it helped to be able to have clothes for my job interviews and things like that...They had donated us several things. I had twins, babies at the time and they -- someone just donated me a double stroller and that really helped a lot because I didn't have a car and so I relied on the tracks, the train and the bus to get me everywhere so it helped to have a double stroller. Beside the stroller, there's just a bunch of stuff donated. . . The apartment that I moved to was completely furnished down to the dishes and stuff. Linens, everything was completely furnished . . . So that was really, really nice to not have to worry about getting furniture, beds, and things for us to sleep on, for us to be comfortable.*

5. Legal assistance

Survivors described legal assistance as an urgent area of need. They told us that they needed affordable, competent representation to protect their interests in court, and also legal advocates to help them understand and navigate court processes. The need for defense representation for victims who are arrested was also identified.

> *. . . a lower cost or no cost legal option, my mom had to pay for my lawyer.*
>
> *Having people, having people go to court with you. Another thing that I did run into was, I didn't have the money to file for divorce. So, [the domestic violence program] just gave me a number to call for legal help. I called and I did the application process and I was really upset when I got a letter back that basically said they couldn't help me with it because my husband made enough to pay for the divorce. My husband didn't want the divorce, you know. That was zero help at all. So, when you go to a lawyer and you need a $1500 retainer, where do you get $1500? So, some kind of program to say, OK, let's get what's their income before we decide how much they have to pay for a lawyer.*
>
> *Everyone knows, I think, that cases are going to take a long time but you don't realize how slow it could be or what that's going to really look like when it happens, and I wish I would have known. Now that I've worked in the courts I can look back and see all of these things, like if I had just known this is what was happening and understood who all the players were and what was really happening in that courtroom things could have been different, or at least I would have gone in there with my eyes open. So better training for victims to know what's happening and to really be, I want to say kept in the loop and I know that our of advocates do the best that we can, but I still feel like there's still like a missing piece in there, because I still feel like I walked into the courtroom not even understanding.*
>
> *My first step here was the restraining order which that was huge and my advocate that's what you call them. It was huge in that she came and sat in the courtroom with me which was awesome so you didn't feel alone.*

6. Safety strategies

Survivors told us that they want domestic violence programs to help them develop plans to increase their safety in the community. They wanted programs to assist with safety planning around the period of leaving, and over the period of recovery as they established new households. They wanted safety planning for themselves and also for their children. They also thought that it would be helpful if domestic violence programs could assist with the cost of security systems/devices.

> *I think a lot of people stay in a bad situation like that because they don't know how to get out, so maybe help with knowing an escape plan, or whatever. But I have to have a plan. My children have to have a plan, for if we see him.*

7. Housing assistance

Safe and stable housing was a primary concern for survivors (see **page 16** above). They appreciated domestic violence programs that included transitional housing options; they relied on the affordability and also of the security provided by those housing options.

> *"The apartments that were in connection with the shelter, they made it so that through the housing authority, we were able to apply for assistance. And so I rented it. Normally, the rent for the three-bedroom apartment that I had was a thousand dollars a month. But I only had to pay, like, $200 a month for rent. So that helped to be able to have that assistance available for sure especially being a single parent and then coming out of the situation.*
>
> *One of which was having that safe place to stay. I did stay in the shelter for a while. And the shelter did provide transitional housing so you could -- if you qualify, you go from the shelter to the apartments right across the parking lot which was really nice. And in those apartment, you still had the protection. There's still security. The apartments are locked down. You couldn't get in without a smart access card."*

8. Transportation assistance

Survivors identified the lack of reliable transportation as a barrier to separating from an abusive relationship and building independent lives. They appreciated transportation assistance from domestic violence programs including occasional rides, vouchers for taxis and public transportation systems, and help with getting or repairing a personal vehicle. One survivor told us that the domestic violence program helped her to learn how to drive.

> *"They provided us with bus tokens to get on the bus. A lot of us didn't have cars. I think most of us didn't have cars where I was staying. And so they gave us bus tokens. And if there was somewhere that we needed to get to and the bus wasn't going to get us there for whatever reason, our case manager has made it possible they had vehicles and they made it possible for us to get to where we needed to go, so that helped a lot."*

Other Service Needs

Additional areas of need that were important to survivors, but less frequently mentioned included childcare services that allowed them to attend sensitive appointments and to seek employment, and relationship skill development programs including positive parenting and healthy partner relationships. Additional resources that they needed in conjunction with shelter included services or plans for their pets, and also storage space so that they wouldn't lose their household possessions while using shelter.

Domestic Violence Programs and Services for Children

1. Support systems

Therapeutic supports: Many survivors believed that therapeutic supports were essential for helping their kids to understand and recover from their experiences of family violence. As with the therapeutic services that they wanted for themselves, survivors wanted counseling services for their kids to be available, affordable and competent to serve survivors of violence and trauma. Alternative therapeutic strategies like whole family counseling, art therapy, and the use of therapeutic animals were mentioned. Helping their kids to understand that they weren't to blame for the abuse was a central concern for survivors.

> *Well, children get damaged. They need something like... well, yes, counseling, and go to psychologists and groups where I think they can communicate, speak and say what they feel.*
>
> *Children, they understand fighting, but they don't understand why, or sometimes they might blame themselves for, 'Well, this is the reason why mommy or daddy or even mom and boyfriend are fighting, because of me,' or something. So they would need some type of group therapy to understand what's going on to their level. And hopefully teach them that that's not the way to handle conflict. That's . . . I think that's another problem, I think that's why they have so much violence going on because that's what they're seeing in their own home, so that's the way they grew up and so that's the only thing they know in terms of handling conflict.*
>
> *. . . have a family counseling, creating activities that the family can do together, for the children and the parents to work together . . .*

Support groups: Many survivors thought that a support group among youth would help their kids to understand that they are not alone in their experiences of family violence, and to really understand that the violence wasn't their fault. Survivors suggested that these groups could run at the same time as groups for adult survivors.

> *I think definitely having people to talk with, not necessarily like sitting on a couch and have a therapist. Because that's kind of daunting to a child. But, I don't know, maybe have a group of kids and have a craft or something that they can be doing. Just somebody that they have a relationship with that's not mom. Because you can't tell everything to mom. But that's trained in trauma and children, and can listen to them and talk with them.*
>
> *For my two boys, they received services through the kids group, and actually not too long ago, we drove by here and my youngest who's now eight remembered this place and had good memories and so that was huge for my boys.*

Other sources of support: Survivors wanted a continuum of supports to help foster recovery and well-being for their kids. They wanted the supportive services provided by domestic violence programs to be complemented by community-based support including mentoring programs and supports at school. Survivors wanted adult mentors to provide their kids with another stable, caring relationship, and also to model healthy relationship behaviors. They appreciated the school staff members who were understanding and

compassionate with their kids as they managed the disruptions that they were experiencing at home.

> *One thing that I've been trying to get for my boys is to get them involved with male role models.*
>
> *A good support system at school.*

2. Programs and activities

In addition to structured time spent focusing on recovery and support, survivors wanted their children to have lots of time and spaces where they could just play and be kids—without needing to think about the abuse. Survivors told us that activities could provide their kids with the time and attention that could promote recovery and wellbeing. They said that the routine and structure provided by regular programming could help their children to regain a sense of stability in their lives. Some thought that their kids were more likely to discuss their experiences of family violence in unstructured activities with trusted adults and peers than they were in more clinical, therapeutic settings.

Survivors want programs to provide a range of activities, and to partner with other community agencies, in order to offer programs that are engaging for kids across ages and diverse interests. Survivors recommended that programs provide activities related to sports, the arts and nature. They also thought that youth would benefit from opportunities to practice basic life skills, to develop leadership skills and to volunteer in their community.

> *Safe environment. I know . . . Girls Inc., places like that, little hang outs where everyone can go and have a good time and get away from what's happening at home.*
>
> *I know the Julian Center has some children's counseling, too, but you can, you don't need a counseling environment necessarily, you can help children process their feelings through activities. Sometimes for them, it's more freeing and more safe to do that, than in a more clinical setting. A more structured environment doesn't feel as natural. Like Turkey Run, I'll just take that, or Eagle Creek. These are great big parks . . . Especially if kids aren't regularly around nature. Everybody lives near it. But it's very comforting, like for my kids, animals.*
>
> *I think having a program that helps children and not just children, but children that are particularly getting into teens. Having a teen program.*

Domestic Violence Services in the Community

1. Domestic violence education

Survivors wanted advocates to conduct public education about domestic violence—with many groups and in diverse settings. They believe that this education can help to reduce the judgment and stigma surrounding the problem while also preparing community members to recognize the signs, to understand the dynamics, and to connect survivors with services.

Prevention education for youth: Survivors told us that education about healthy relationships should be provided to young people from early childhood through early adulthood in order to normalize conversations about relationships and to reduce the stigma and isolation that many survivors feel within their

experiences of abuse. Survivors believe that prevention education could help young people to understand healthy relationship behaviors, to recognize the dynamics of abuse, and to provide helpful information and support to peers that are experiencing abuse.

> *Awareness programs need to be available in the community from preschool through adulthood.*
>
> *I -- well, I always think that if they taught more younger kids, like whenever I was a teenager was when my domestic violence issue started. And I always feel like when you experience domestic violence as a child, you always think that's normal, but if you had healthy relationship, classes or something that kind of shows you that what a healthy relationship is.*
>
> *We never had anything in school, we never had any kind of education on what it looks like and what to look out for, you know, what are the red flags and what to do when those things pop up. And, um, even just hearing from people who have went through it, I just – I don't know, it's kind of amazing, I mean, it's not amazing but you're not, like, alone in this situation, you know what I mean? There's thousands, millions of people who go through this and – but you don't hear about it.*

Education for professionals: Survivors encourage domestic violence programs to provide training about the dynamics of domestic violence to a broad range of professionals and programs that interact with the public. They believe that this training is critical for helping individuals working within these systems to identify signs of domestic violence, to support survivors' safety, and to provide sensitive, competent services. Survivors identified the need for training among law enforcement, healthcare, courts, schools, businesses, and churches.

> *They're educating the hairdressers. They're educating the nurses as people come in through ER, especially . . . I think Melissa said that they did some education with the gas station attendants. That's one thing that you wouldn't think of, but in that situation, that was the only way I could get out of the car. He would let me go in there by myself. And I asked her to call 911 and she didn't. So, that could have gone really badly. So, education for those people that you don't even think about are gonna be the ones that are gonna notice is critical.*
>
> *Employers need skilled HR staff so they can help victims and be empathetic when they have an encounter at home.*
>
> *I see a great need for education, the legal system about domestic violence, especially when it comes to children.*
>
> *Males are just, they don't have a clue. I'm not saying all of them—In the police field . . . I think they need a sensitivity training class. I do. I think they need to let them walk in an abusive situation for about a week. Like, roleplaying, and then see how it would make them feel. Maybe they can understand . . .*

Education for families/support people: Survivors told us that they want domestic violence programs to help educate community members so that their friends and family members are prepared to understand their experiences and to provide helpful support. They want their loved ones to know about community resources and also to understand dynamics common in many abusive relationships. They believe that where their friends and family understand the dynamics (why survivors may choose to stay, why they may have loving feelings for the person who hurt them, the often prolonged duration of recovery, and the different forms of abuse—emotional, economic, etc.), they will provide them with a more compassionate response.

> *"For families of people who have been abused, again have a good education thing for them as well. So how to handle your family members that have been abused, how to talk to them, maybe even ways on how to help them get away how to maybe make their house safe for if they need to get away and the abuser would follow. Education on something along those lines.*
>
> *Some people will say something and the thing they're gonna say to you is "get out." If you don't leave when they want you to, they're angry. They don't understand the power and control, that you're being controlled, because they're not in it. So, if you're not in this situation, it is very hard for family and friend members . . . they're just not saying the right things to you. Because if you're already being abused, you do not need to be yelled at for being in an abusive relationship, for not leaving. So, I think it's harder for family and friends to understand. They don't."*

3. Service facilitation and coordination

In a time when they were confronted with so many difficult decisions, survivors wanted supportive resources to be very easy to find and to use. This included information about domestic violence program services, but also the broader array of resources that they needed to rebuild their lives. Survivors want service information to be broadly publicized, and they want service providers to collaborate to address survivors' needs holistically. Critically, they told us that information about services and resources needs to be available in the languages spoken in the community.

Resource information hub: Current information about community resources should be collected, maintained, and publicized online and in print. Multi-sectoral service providers should all have this information. In compiling these resources, providers should be responsive to issues of cultural and language access in their community.

> *"I didn't know enough to know who to reach out. My first experience with it, I was 16 years old and was laying in the hospital. And nobody could offer me any help. Nobody knew who to call. Nobody knew what the resources were. And that was the biggest problem for all of us.*
>
> *More than anything, more information about the existing programs. We know help programs exist but most of the times we don't know. . . you can walk by the street and see one of the signs of a help agency, but if you don't understand the language and can't read the sign to see what it is about. so it would be like, more than anything, information in Spanish, for the community."*

> *Well, my problem was I actively searched for resources and I couldn't find it. I was on waiting lists for shelters and it forced me to stay with the abuser. Someone should have been able to say that there was an emergency shelter that I could have used to get out of that environment. Just more information and resources.*

Coordinated service delivery: Service providers should regularly collaborate to facilitate the delivery of services. They should be aware of the array of services available in their community and assist survivors in connecting with the resources that they choose.

> *I think one way the communities can help survivors is to realize that if many different community services or community agencies were to work together like spokes of a wheel, so providing different types of services. That could make a big difference. Because, otherwise most people look at the overall burden and it's intimidating. . . but I think of it more like spokes on a wheel, that if I'm in the center, what will help me is, if you could help me by doing this, and if you could help by doing this . . ."*
>
> *The officials need to know what they're talking about because at the time they don't. They don't -- no one's communicating with each other. The judges, the DAs, the -- to the officers themselves, it's just -- it's like -- what's the word I'm looking for? Discombobulated.*

3. Outreach

Survivors said that community outreach was a critical strategy for facilitating survivors' access to services. Outreach in the community helped survivors to know about services, to understand how they work, to determine whether they trust them, and to decide if they are a good fit for their needs. Survivors described the need for regular, intentional outreach to communities that have been marginalized in order to build trust and relationships with those stakeholders. When reaching out to underserved communities, agency information and representatives must be responsive to issues of cultural relevance and language access.

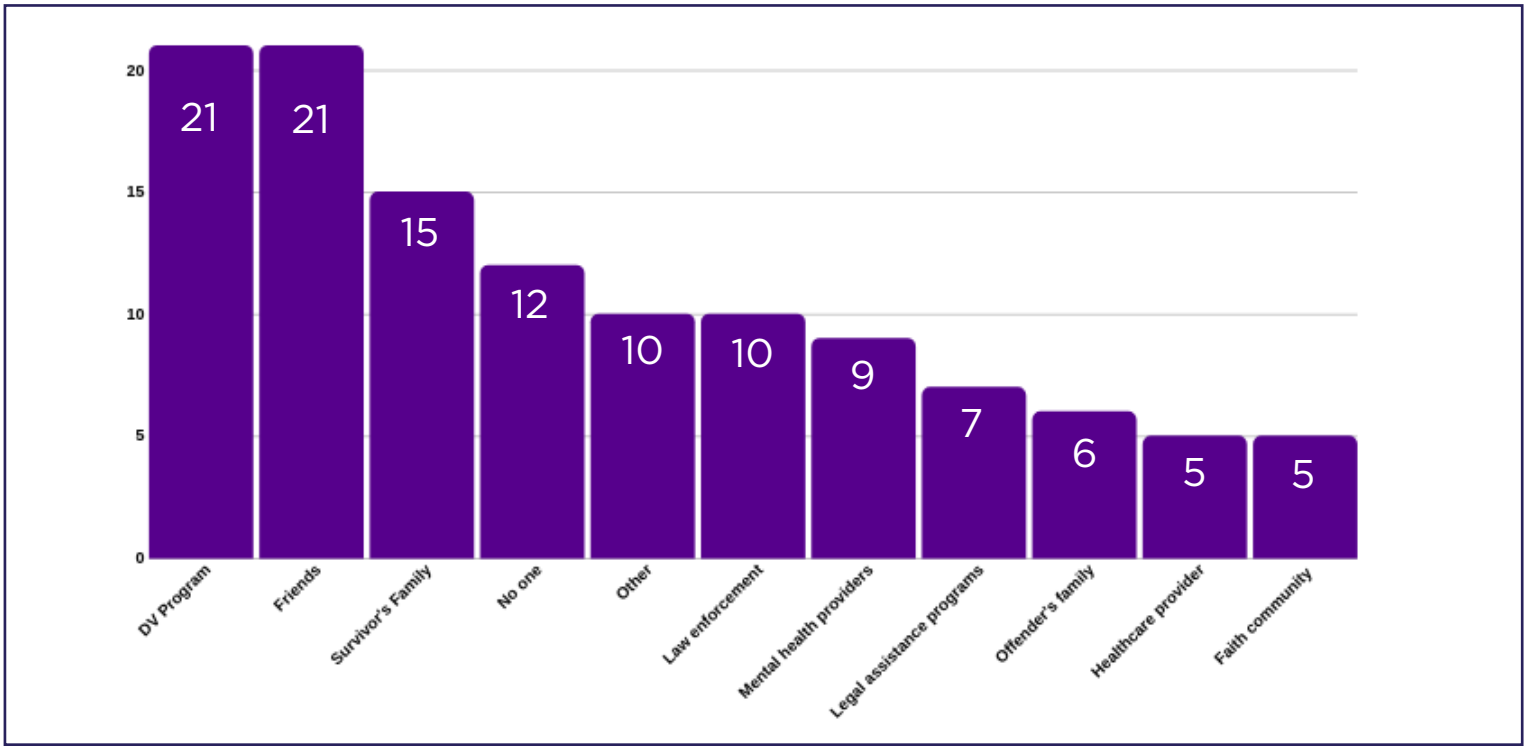
> *I would say having a presence at queer positive events. You know having the local shelters be represented at Indy Pride every year and saying, 'hey, we are here and we want to help you, too.' And you shouldn't have to be silent just because, you know, you identify as other than the majority. And there's, I mean, there's events all the time and places where you know they could distribute cards or material and say, you know, 'this is a safe space for you, too' . . . just having that resource to say, you know, 'we value you, and we're specifically looking for you and not expecting people to assume that we fall under that blanket of you know, we want you here , too.' Because that's almost never the assumption when you identify as other.*
>
> *If you're doing community outreach, it's more of a leverage of them [survivors] probably stepping forward because I see that it is a thin line between stepping into a shelter. There's these ifs and what ifs. What if there's gonna be bugs, if it's gonna be clean, if I'm gonna have food, if my kids — you know. What does it look like? Is it the size of an 8x8 jail cell? Like I don't know. And then all the rules that come behind it.*

4. Access to a domestic violence advocate

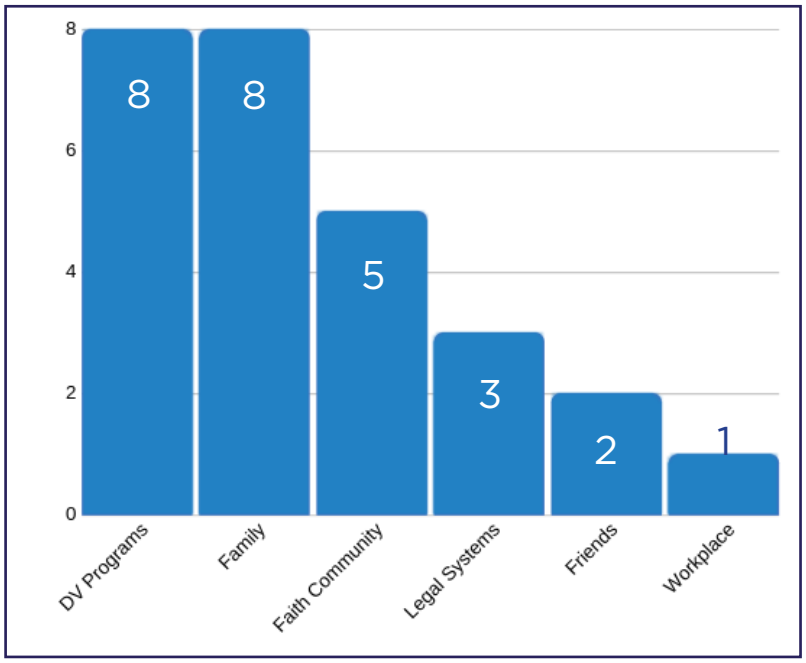
Survivors said that access to a domestic violence advocate should be available 24/7. They wanted to be able to reach out for needs related to support, for safety planning, to get information about services, and to access them.

> *That I have somebody that I can talk to that can help me figure out how to be safe.*
>
> *As a victim, you don't know what you're supposed to be asking for. You almost need someone to help you through this, because you're not -- you're just trying to survive.*

Who survivors are reaching out to:



Who else survivors would have liked to reach out to:



To identify barriers to disclosure, the interviewers asked survivors whether there were additional people or agencies that they would have liked to have reached out to for support, but for some set of reasons, didn't believe those contacts would not be helpful for them.

This chart shows who else survivors would have liked to have talked with about their experiences.

Common barriers that survivors identified related to disclosure included stigma, concerns about safety, being unaware of services, not knowing how to access/navigate services, feeling uncertain about eligibility for services, and experiences of isolation that prevented them from accessing supports.

Barriers to Disclosure	
Uncertainty about eligibility for services	• *"I was afraid of going to a shelter because I did not know how things were. I was afraid because I don't have any papers and I was afraid they were going to deport me. I mean, you have so much fear and you say, 'If I go there, what if I make a mistake? What if they take away my child?' There are many things that go through your head at that moment."* • *"It's about just the fact that I'm a guy. I don't feel like shelters are an option for me."* • *"I didn't know if they had a vehicle or an accessible van or not that I can know and I could trust and I feel comfortable saying, 'get me the hell out of this situation.' but I didn't really know who to call, I didn't know how to get anyone to come out help me. And there was no one because I was too scared."*
Stigma/shame (internal)	• *"I knew that there were halfway houses but my perception, image of what that was going to look like, I thought that meant that I was broken, I was hopeless, that I was helpless, that I didn't have friends or family in my life. And for some reason I thought it would take me to a bad, that it would be a bad place. I just had a lot of misconceptions about it."* • *"No. I knew about available resources, but didn't really use them. Maybe stigma held me back."* • *"I felt all out ashamed in approaching people for help."*
Perceived judgment (external)	• *"Probably church and work would have been where I would have gone but I felt like I had to, church we kind of discussed already. I just felt like that wasn't acceptable."* • *"I would like to have been able to count more on my friends. But I let them down at the time I felt like they would let me down. But what it was is like, if you call me, and I'll come and get you, and I take you to my house but then an hour later here he comes knocking at the door; you leave with him. And that this doesn't just happen once, twice. It happens every time that you call me and want help, but then you go right back to the same situation. Then my friends became like don't call us anymore. It's just BS because you're not willing to do anything to change it."* • *"I'm a strong believer and I still go to church. I want my children to have a strong faith because I believe in God. But I think churches, they don't really know what the Bible teaches about abuse, abuse victims. They have such a superficial idea about what it is and what it does to your soul. For people, for Christians, if you're a Christian, you should be the most sympathetic person, right? Aren't we supposed to show the love of God? Yet what I have found is that sometimes there are worse than people I know who aren't Christians."*
Safety concerns	• *"But everybody there knew. I always heard people talk about it like, 'Yeah, the house where the women who were abused it's got a bigger door on it.' Everybody knew. So I didn't feel safe going there. So I continued to stay in relationship because anytime that they tried to direct to me some place it just -- I wouldn't have felt safe there."*
Isolation	• *"I'd become very isolated by that relationship. You know, he never wanted to spend time with people, he always wanted it to be just us and so I'd been absent from my friend's lives for so long. And it felt wrong to say, hey, I know I haven't spoken to you in like five years but now I need you to do things for me. I'm sure that's probably a pretty typical problem."*

What Survivors Felt They Needed to Hide

Nature of the abusive relationship (14)	Identities (11)	Behaviors (6)
1. Experiences of abuse (7) • Minimize (4) • Amplify (2) • Duration (1) 2. Compassion for the abuser (4) • Still having feelings (2) • Wanting to protect (2) 3. Relationship Decisions • Stay (1) • Leave (1) • Return (1)	1. Immigration status (4) 2. Income (2) 3. Gender identities (2) 4. Gender (1) 5. Sexual orientation (1) 6. Mental health diagnosis (1)	1. Addictions/substance use (4) 2. Manner/attitude (2)

Nature of the Abusive Relationship

In engaging with family members, friends and service agencies, and the broader community, survivors often felt like they needed to manage the narrative of their experiences in order to get a helpful response. The pressure around making the "right" decisions regarding the relationship (leaving, staying, prosecuting, etc.) made these survivors feel like they needed to modify their stories in order to validate their decisions and experiences.

In talking with friends or family members, survivors often minimized the nature of the abuse that they were experiencing (hid injuries, minimized physical acts of violence or only revealed emotional forms of abuse) in order to try to avoid judgment and unwanted interventions.

> *. . . it was embarrassing, that's the word. To me, it was embarrassing that I was getting that and everybody else had this magical -- all my relatives has a magical marriage. So, they never knew. I mean, they just found out this year that [he] hit me.*

In order to have the seriousness of their experiences acknowledged, some survivors thought that they needed to amplify the perception of danger in their experiences. Some survivors believed that they would only be eligible for domestic violence program services if they had experienced physical forms of abuse, and that this abuse had to be current. These survivors reported changing the timelines of their experiences and reporting physical abuse along with the emotional forms of abuse that they were experiencing.

> *Because my relationship was more emotional and verbal, than it was physical and sometimes I felt like I would have to lie and act like it was more physical than it was because I would explain how emotionally it was tearing me apart inside but no one would really listen to me because outside it was fine.*
>
> *I was afraid that I would be turned away because he hadn't actually beat me.*

To access services and to avoid judgment, survivors indicated that they hid the fact that they still had loving feelings for their abuser, and/or wanted to protect that person from consequences. Finally, in the face of judgment, survivors reported the need to hide their relationship decisions in every direction including the decision to stay in the relationship, the decision to leave the relationship and the decision to return to the relationship several times after the initial separation.

> *I had to feel like I had to hide that I still really had feelings for that person and that, I didn't know — I felt like I couldn't tell them that I might want to go back because I feel ashamed or if I did go back, I would avoid those people so they wouldn't know and that they wouldn't be disappointed in me.*

Identities

Survivors reported feeling like they needed to hide significant aspects of their identities out of concern that they would be denied services, or that they might experience discrimination and judgment in the context of services. Survivors reported their decisions to hide information about their mental health, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and immigration status. Survivors also indicated that they sometimes felt like they had to hide sources of income in order to be eligible for assistance programs

> *Sometimes I thought about calling in or contacting somebody under the guise of being a woman because I also heard stuff about men not being taken very seriously in abuse centers, being hung up on and even basically told to leave the centers and stuff like that.*
>
> *Because I'm illegal, he's always scaring me about my job, about my stuff. And that's why always I stay quiet down and say nothing.*

Behaviors

Similarly, survivors indicated that they believed that they needed to hide behaviors, or to modify their behavior in order to receive the services that they needed. Substance use and addiction were main concerns that survivors had to hide out of fear that disclosure could result in a referral to law enforcement or child protective services. Survivors expressed frustration that this barrier prevented them from accessing the addiction services that they wanted. Some survivors said that they felt they needed to be on their best behavior (hiding feelings of anger or dissatisfaction) in order to have successful relationships with service providers. This concern was expressed regarding services in community organizations, and in faith-based programs.

> *If I were to go to a Christian counseling center, I would feel the need out of respect to speak more properly, to never use profanity, you know, I wouldn't have been myself. I wouldn't have been my raw self and I wouldn't have told the truth about everything. I wouldn't have told all the bad stuff. I would have held back way more and I feel like I probably would've left feeling judged quite a few times .*
>
> *I always felt scared to talk about my substance abuse issues especially when I was pregnant. I felt like everybody was going to judge and then they were like going to try to take my daughter away or take him [son] away.*

Service responses: Interventions & supports that survivors described as helpful, or unhelpful

Helpful Interventions & Supports	Respondent	Negative interventions & responses
38 positive responses • Supportive relationships and environments (22) • Empowerment orientation to services (7) • Support groups (5) • Help understanding and navigating situation (4)	**Domestic violence programs**	**23 negative responses** • Inflexible/controlling (7) • Barriers (7) • Judgment (4) • Safety (4) • Lack of professionalism (1)
19 positive responses • Competent/knowledgeable about DV (8) • Compassionate/believed (7) • Empowerment orientation (2) • Listened (1) • Affordable (1)	**Healthcare & Mental Healthcare providers**	**8 negative responses** • Weren't prepared to identify/ acknowledge abuse (3) • Superficial/inadequate services (2) • Didn't provide resources/ connections (1) • Lack of compassion (1) • Endangered survivor (1)
16 positive responses • Emotional support (9) • Material support (temp. housing, etc. (4) • Held abuser accountable (2) • Provided resource info (1)	**Friends**	**6 negative responses** • Judgment/lack of understanding of DV (3) • Attacking the abuser (2) • Pressure to leave/not return (1)
11 positive responses • Unspecified (5) • Emotional support (3) • Material support (2) • Intervention (1)	**Family**	**22 negative responses** • Pressure to leave (5) • Pressure to stay (4) • Got involved with the conflict (4) • Judgment/lack of understanding of DV (4) • Other (5)
8 positive responses • Non-judgmental support (2) • Getting strength from faith (2) • Material support (1) • Abuse recovery class (1) • Unspecified (2)	**Faith community**	**10 negative responses** • Denial/minimization (4) • Pressure to maintain the relationship (3) • Judgment/lack of understanding of DV (3)
6 positive responses • Great counselors (2) • Collaborating on safety (2) • Programs (1) • Unspecified (1)	**School staff**	**3 negative responses** • Unresponsive to TDV/minimized seriousness (3)
8 positive responses • Workplace (3) • Homeless programs (2) • 211 (1) • Food pantries (1) • Bank (1)	**Other service organizations**	

Domestic Violence Programs

Helpful Responses

Supportive relationships and environments

- *"Because all these people here in Safe Passage, they care about me, about my kids. They care about how I feel every day . . . They make me feel safe."*
- *"And I think having the Hope's Voice, having somebody that I can call or I can text makes me feel much better because sometimes you get in a situation and you're thinking, oh no, what do I do? This office has always been really helpful, honestly . . . So, that's a big piece of the safety. Just knowing you have somebody that you can talk to."*
- *"I do get a lot of support here. I'm finding more support, like people that I didn't think just because you're a child counselor -- she told me, 'Come up to my office any time.' I mean, it's amazing. This place is amazing."*

Empowerment orientation to services

- *"Just being able to express myself and talk about it without being judged. Feels like I was a person again. I had some say-so about things. And wasn't just someone who was telling me what to do. I had my own opinion."*
- *"She said, 'what do you want with your life? ' No one had ever said that to me. I didn't even know. At that point, what I was, emotionally, mentally. I didn't even know that I could do that. That I could make choices like that. That changed my whole perspective, changed my whole life."*
- *"Programs should find more ways to connect survivors with leadership opportunities. Lift up their gifts."*

Support groups

- *"I think sometimes domestic violence, that sense of isolation continues. And I don't know if there's a way to create community for survivors that is not necessarily tied to going to a shelter or a facility. Something you know, I don't know, support groups that are more community anchored instead of you know being so much like one of the shelters. Just help connecting to other people with that shared lived experience, so that you know, it kind of facilitates those conversations and sometimes it feels like I'm the only one because people don't talk about it."*

Help understanding and navigating situation

- *"We went to Safe at Home with the lawyers, just to help me because I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't understand the process of what to do, and how to make sure the best safety of the kids and me because they were scared to death."*

Unhelpful Responses

Inflexible/controlling

- *"When I went there, it was at a very, very vulnerable time. It was right after a very traumatic event that just happened. I just didn't feel comfortable or safe . . . There were a lot of rules. A lot of rules. I was a grown woman with two kids. I felt kind of demeaned. They were like trying to teach me how to do laundry. I don't want to talk about it."*
- *"I stayed there for a short period of time but they had so many rules and regulations that it felt like they were getting in the way of living your life, finding housing, finding a job. It felt like they just wanted to lock you in. It took up so much time it didn't feel feasible to be able to work at the end of the day."*

Barriers

- *"domestic violence shelters there, and they said, well, is he beating you? I said no. They said, we can't help you because we're so full. We can only take, if you're fearing for your life, or he's actually beating you. I felt like, oh, I guess it doesn't matter."*
- *"The language barrier, in the case of Hispanics who don't speak English. It is limiting."*

Judgment

- *"I think they need to be more patient. When a survivor shows up as a victim, they're not always ready to leave yet. The mentality is not there to make the exit. And if you don't exit on their time, they are no longer going to serve you. And even if that's not the reality, that's the perception."*
- *"They need to be able to express, you know, like explain you know, my story. And to get, like, more of a solution as a response, instead of being like looked at and put in this fucking crazy category of the battered woman who is fucking desperate."*

Safety: these survivors described concerns about their safety in sharing space with other shelter residents who were managing issues related to mental health and addictions

Lack of professionalism

- *"When I decided that I wanted to leave, I knew that I would have to get a protective order. Well, I called the police station because I wasn't sure how to go about it. They told me I just needed to go up to the clerk's office and file. I go up to the clerk's office, and they told me no, that's not right. You need to go through [the domestic violence program], victim's advocate or something, and they gave me the little purple card. I called one of the women on that. She never called me back. That was a couple of weeks before I left for good. She never did call me...then I think probably a week or two after all that was done, I got that phone call. I said, 'It's already done.' Yeah, I know things can fall through the cracks. I know they can and I understand that. But I could have died in between. In between then and the time that I did finally get out."*

Healthcare/Mental Healthcare

Helpful Responses

Competent/knowledgeable about DV

- *"And I think that was the first time I've ever heard that, and I was just kind of speechless. To look back, and wow, I was emotionally abused, mentally, financially. For somebody to recognize it and then say it...and I won't say that I'm completely through healing with this. But when you're on the path and then hearing it, that's very helpful."*

Compassionate/believed

- *"I could see it in her eyes that she wanted so badly to help me and she believed in me. That was the number one thing...Even on the first day when I was a hot mess, I know she believed in me and she wanted to help. And that made me feel special and worthwhile where the men I dated and made me feel so worthless. Just having that one person that cared genuinely."*

Empowerment orientation

- *"I had a great counselor. That's more of what I'm talking about earlier with the, helping with that healing component of happiness and wholeness. She was really great. She was very much like [my domestic violence advocate] in the fact that she was empowering. She never told me that my decisions were right or wrong. She just kind of let me talk direct, and kind of come to my own revelations. She was excellent, excellent."*

Affordable

- *"She was in Indianapolis though, but she was great. She was on a sliding scale, so that was nice for me, because I can afford her. Yeah, it helped me to deal with some of that emotional stuff that was still heavy on me."*

Listened

- *"I found a couple of providers who actually listened."*

Unhelpful Responses

Weren't prepared to identify/acknowledge abuse

- *"I think my biggest concern when I was still in the abusive relationship and suffering from depression is the few times I sought help through hospitalization is that no one acknowledged the abuse. I felt like the clinicians and providers were focused on giving me a diagnosis and getting me to a point where I could function enough to be discharged (back to the abusive environment), but they weren't even acknowledging the root of the problem."*
- *"I went to the hospital after a man slammed a door on my hand, nearly severing my fingers. I told them that it was a car door. They knew that this wasn't possible for a car door to do this. They never asked about it or seemed suspicious.*

Superficial/inadequate services

- *"I was frustrated with the quality of the trauma therapy. I felt like it was too short and not -- because like six women in one hour once a week. You know, for six women to share about their week, and then there's the curriculum that you're supposed to talk about. It's really not in depth enough. The format doesn't suit everybody. But they made the group mandatory, if you're going to meet with somebody privately. So when I left the group, because I said, this isn't helping and it's taking up three hours out of my day by the time I've got on the bus here and then the meeting and then gone back. Then it was $10 each time as well so that's $40 a month that I'm like, I have other things I need to spend that on, when it's not helping."*

Didn't provide resources/connections

- *"There is no safety when you go to the emergency room for care. They don't hook you up with somebody who can talk to you and help you."*

Lack of compassion

- *"I remember a therapist saying there was no help for me at one time, so, yea I don't have too much trust when it comes to therapists and stuff... nobody should be told that there is no help for them, that can impact a person, just saying."*

Endangered survivor

- *"I'm like, "Why do you ask that in the triage? Why don't you wait until you get the patient back into x-ray or back when they're alone, because if my perpetrator sitting there with me and I--and you're asking me am I in fear for life and they're right there, I'm not gonna tell you."*

Friends & Family

Helpful Responses

Emotional support

- *"Having someone to listen and to hear it over and over. I knew what they were going to say, I just needed to hear it again."*
- *"I think the biggest thing for both of them is that I did not feel very strong or capable and they held me . . . Like, they knew that I could do it. And I didn't know I could do it."*

Material support (temp. housing, etc.)

- *"My friends helped me move all of my things out. They gave me a place to stay, food, time to find a job, a place to vent my emotions, patience, general support."*
- *"And my aunt had an apartment and she said, you know, come up beside your family for a while. And so that really helped."*
- *"I lived with her for a while. So, I get on my feet and for my face to clear, because I couldn't go and look for a job. My face was really, really black and blue . . . And she's very supportive, she didn't bother me, and she would let me lay down, because I needed to just breathe."*

Held abuser accountable

- *"One of his best friends seen him come at behind me and slammed my ears like this when I have the baby in my arms, our six-week-old baby, you know. And I was lying over on the couch after I handed the woman, my baby, and his best friend went in there with him in the kitchen and he said, 'I don't know what you did that for, you got one of the best wives there is.' he said, 'There's no excuse for that.'"*

Unhelpful Responses

Judgment/lack of understanding of DV

- *"But as far as like friends and family, there's still such a stigma about domestic violence. I had a lot of people say like, 'Well, you're smarter than that. Why did you get caught up in that?"*
- *"I only had one friend that I felt comfortable enough, and she didn't understand the cycle of abuse. The first time I called her, she came and rescued me, if you will, and . . . we talked and, of course, with the cycle, he's, 'I'm sorry, this will never happen again and blah, blah, blah.' And I was in love. And so you go back, and then she was like, 'Well, if this happens again, don't call me.'"*

Got involved in the conflict/Attacking the abuser

- *"They would beat him up."*
- *"I told my mom once that [abuser] hit me and she was about to go kill him, so I decided -- I can't tell her this thing, you know, so that was -- I just, yeah, didn't tell her anymore. I just -- she'd say, 'Did he hit you again?' 'No.'*

Pressure to leave/not return

- *"I know my family stopped talking to me, because I would never leave. And they got tired of hearing it. I got another black eye today, I have to cover it up. I got to go to work. I don't want to hear it. You're not going to leave, so don't call me. And that's your family. But they don't understand."*
- *"my family, but they didn't really understand. They just thought that you can just walk away and that you're being stupid if you keep going back."*

Pressure to stay

- *"Because of my family pressure, I went back."*
- *"Some people didn't understand . . . They thought I should just buck it up and deal with it. So yeah. That was the thing that was unhelpful."*
- *"When I was leaving, I had to block his family because they were contacting me on social media talking about how I was ruining their son's life. Everything I was doing was wrong."*

Didn't believe/didn't help

- *"And his mom, somehow, she knew where I was. Got a hold of me at the shelter and called me and said that she talked to him and that he said that I made everything up that he didn't really hurt me. And I think to this day, she still would like to believe that I've made it all up. So they're not very supportive. At one point, his aunt had said to me that she runs a group -- a support group for abusers and that a lot of the women make up being beat up. And I'm thinking that you in my situation with your nephew, why would you say that to me?"*
- *"They were powerless. They cared, but there was no recourse—legal or social."*

Disparaging the abuser

- *"What I found never helpful was when somebody tried to attack the person that was abusing me. I already know that he's a crappy person."*
- *"But someone in my family was running him down, and it definitely messes kids up. I have to stop it, you know, when I found it out, and I said, 'Hey, you don't do that. They're too weak, kids are too weak to understand that, so don't.'"*

Faith Community

Helpful Responses

Non-judgmental support

- *"I called my Pastor. Back to the first meeting when I had told her what was going on, she said, 'Do you want to leave right now? I'll take you right now. If you want to go, If not, that's fine. If you want to go later, if you want to stay, that's fine, I'll support you.' I called her up and I said, I need to go right now before he gets home from work. She came and got me and brought me here. Then she sent me a card from the elders of the church that had signed it, 'We're praying for you.'"*
- *". . . minister from the local church. She was also there from the very beginning. She wasn't there to give me advice. She was there for me to vent to. And that was one person that was critical in me going through the process. Even when we tried to make it work, we tried to get back together, she didn't judge me. If I asked her, what do you think, she would stay pretty neutral. Unless it was a situation where it would be in danger, she'd say, well, that's not a good idea. So, when I would be thinking through that, should I go back, should I not go back? I knew that I could say that to her and just get that out that I was thinking that because that's not something you want to tell somebody else, like thinking about going back and then they're mad."*

Getting strength from faith

- *"I went to my church just to have prayer. I am very spiritual. Everything I lean on when it comes to stress and pain and anything, I'm like, let me pray about it or let me go to the church for a safe place to release. But I leaned on my church and I feel like that was, depending on your level of engagement with your church, that is very beneficial to help get through things."*

Unhelpful Responses

Denial/minimization

- *"I think for the most part, Christians in the Christian community don't want to see that. They're very resistant to it. They don't want to, or they want there to be reconciliation. Instead of providing -- they don't really provide any services other than counselling. Even the church that I received Kroger gift cards from, they try to encourage me to come in for counseling. They don't know anything about my situation. I've already had church counseling, local counseling. This is not my problem. I'm not an abuser. He is."*
- *"I tried when I was at church, I told the counselor that I was abused by my father for seven years. And he just said, 'Oh, that's too bad.' And that was the end of it, so it's like okay. That was too bad."*

Pressure to maintain the relationship

- *"For me a lot of it was just the way that I was raised in the church. The church that I went to never talked about it and it was not, divorce was not acceptable and that's how I was raised and so having never, having that viewpoint and then never having any of my youth pastors or pastors ever talk about that and seeing people who were divorced looked down on, made me stay longer than I should have. And then have that mind-set of this can't happen to me and so I think that I wish I would have been talked to more about it and that the reality of this happens to people. That conversation should have been happening when I was growing up."*

Judgment/lack of understanding of DV

- *"Unfortunately in a lot of Christian based faiths, what I learned after all these years . . . is that they really just don't know domestic violence like the professionals do. You know so when you're working within a religion, you know, it's unity, it's forgiveness, it's be submissive to your husband. So what they don't understand that domestic violence, is not primarily a spiritual problem because you can know God and love God, it's a psychological one. So when is something like that a woman or survivor, it's okay to get help from an organization that's been taught to deal with this population of people.*
- *"Well, I reached out to my church first. They were supportive in some ways. But unfortunately they lack some of the understanding and education that comes with a domestic violence victim. They were doing their best. But at times, I would just feel even more confused, because they would tell me, do this, do that. Other people would tell me, do this, do that. They did line up. As a person who's already down and out, and already feeling controlled, you just have a really hard time making decisions and standing up for yourself. That wasn't the best. I think if we could educate that group about empowering, things like that, tactics, or approach. They're just doing their best, trying to help. That was kind of not as helpful."*

School Staff

Helpful Responses	Unhelpful Responses
Great counselors • *"... think the schools, like having excellent counselors, I think that was one thing that truly did help my daughter through that time, was having a great counselor and teacher that were sympathetic and understanding. That focus not just on the academic, but on the emotional needs of the child."* **Collaborating on safety** • *"for my child is that, is at school when you have to have your child out of your sight, that's very scary because you don't know what's gonna happen. So, I called the counselors at the school regularly to say, 'Hey, this is what's going on.'"*	**Unresponsive to teen dating violence/ minimized seriousness** • *"Principal at the time when we came to her with the abusive stuff she's like, 'Boys will be boys.'"* • *"I spend a lot of time in my guidance counselor's office at school. But I felt like -- it was a guy, but I feel like he just made it seem like I was exaggerating with the issue instead of just trying to help me with like, 'Okay. Well, here's some stuff on a healthy relationship or maybe you should talk to your mom . . . ' Or it kind of always got swept under the rug that a dominant male, it's kind of -- either you get one that's dominant and really controlling or it seems like you get one that just doesn't do anything. You can't get that in between."*

Other Organizations

Workplace

- *"I think making people aware of what's going on. I know some people don't talk about it. I work in a small office and so, anybody knew that if he wcame in, to shut the doors and to let me know, you know what I mean?"*
- *"my friends at work. There was two girls had an apartment together and if they hadn't said, hey, come live with us. No, I don't know if I would've gotten out of there or not because at the time, I didn't know that there was any people who could help and they didn't make me feel, I didn't feel ashamed with them."*

Homeless programs

We were unable to use quotes in this area, but survivors described appreciation for programs that provided an array of services—community space and laundry, in a supportive environment.

Bank

- *"This may sound crazy, but, Huntington Bank. When I first went in there, my arm was black and blue and swollen. And they helped me get a new account and everything...they were so supportive from the bank tellers down to the back office."*

Accountability responses

The following charts and quotes illustrate the agencies, processes and individuals that survivors engaged with as they sought to hold the person who harmed them accountable for their abusive behavior. Survivors described the nature of positive and negative interventions as they navigated the accountability processes. They discuss their experiences in working with professionals in the criminal justice systems and also opinions about legal processes and laws related to domestic violence. The second chart provides a sample of survivor quotes that are illustrative of main themes described in each category.

Helpful Interventions & responses	Profession/ intervention	Negative interventions & responses
9 positive responses • Enforcing the law/POs (4) • Collaborating with DV agency (2) • Compassionate response (2) • Providing resource info (1)	Law enforcement	32 negative responses • Unresponsive/didn't enforce the law (16) • Lacked compassion (5) • Blamed victim/defended offender (4) • Didn't provide resource information (2) • Didn't take DV seriously (2) • Forceful/frightening manner (1) • Didn't believe victim (1)
3 positive responses	Protective orders	7 negative responses
2 positive responses	Victims' Assistance	1 negative response
2 positive responses	CPS caseworker	4 negative responses
1 positive response	Judges	7 negative responses
	Domestic violence law	27 negative responses • Child custody issues (7) • Legal protections inadequate o Enhanced charging (4) o No protections for psych, emotional or financial abuse (4) o Married victims (2) o Longer mandatory holds (1) o Warrants not enforced (1) o Inadequate monitoring and victim notification (1) • Timing/delays (2) • Money, poverty and justice (2) • Charges for defensive violence (1) • Gun laws (1) • Property valued over people (1)
	No response/ accountability	20 negative responses
	Attorneys/Prosecutors	6 negative responses
	Community accountability	5 negative responses
	Batterers' intervention programs	4 negative responses
	Court staff	3 negative responses
	Incarceration	2 negative responses
	Guardian ad litem	1 negative response

Law Enforcement

Helpful Responses

Enforcing the law/POs

- *"Having had the police take care of my horrible, awful problem did a lot to make me feel safe because he had me so afraid to call the police. I was sure that if I did he was gonna kill me. But what really happened was they locked him up so that I was even more safe."*
- *"I think they did the right thing in the protection order. They came and they took him away, immediately."*

Collaborating with DV agency

- *"Well I think, you know, the police doing a good job of responding to calls quickly, things like that I think are important when it comes to, especially domestic violence. I love the idea of the advocacy program, you know, like having an advocate call. I feel like when you involve like domestic violence agency and the police together, I think it's a totally different dynamic. I think that helps the victim."*

Compassionate response

- *"the response that I got from the police was very supportive. I really felt like they were looking out for me."*

Providing resource information

- *"I've talked a lot with police manager, detectives and I share with them some of this stuff I'd went through and I was given phone numbers and like if this ever happens again or if you know anybody that this is happening, call us."*

Unhelpful Responses

Unresponsive/didn't enforce the law

- *"Nine times out of 10 nothing will happen, if they call the police, nothing will happen, he'll be mad at me. That just how it works."*
- *"There were threatening texts from [abuser] and he would drive by my house and yell obscenities, threats would not leave my premises when I asked that of him. The police said this is what they had told me that they could not use text because it could have been anybody. It wasn't. He drives up and down my street whenever he wanted. It's a public street and that there wasn't anything that they could do about it even though he was yelling on obscenities and threatening. Parking in front of my house. They said there was nothing they could do about that. So, no, the police did nothing to aid in making me feel safe at all."*
- *"Like why he's not in jail? Because I was in the hospital. I was with my bruise almost for one month. My fingers, he broke two fingers on my hands and the cops they don't see nothing like that. He almost killed me . . .I think it's not fair when some guy beat a girl and then still stay outside."*

Lacked compassion

- *"The police did not see me as a victim. I was bloody and beaten. My clothes were ripped off, but they treated me like part of the problem. A lot of women don't think calling the police is best. They did not see me as human."*
- *I wish that there were was a way that we could really like have law enforcement walk the walk, because I know that we do a lot of programs, that we do training every year but it's just become routine and there's no higher authority that's making them say this is not going to be okay."*

Blamed victim/defended offender

- *"Leaving him in the house . . . Them telling me that he's not that bad, that he's a good guy without looking at the fact what he has done...And then they even made me leave the house to calm down."*
- *"Cops didn't believe me, I was black and blue from head to toe, about dead, and I got put in a home."*

Didn't provide resource information

- *"I had went to the police station to report that I was choked. And I didn't have any marking and there was nothing there. And I was basically told, you know, just to leave and it's, you know, telling somebody to leave is not really as supportive like if they were telling--if they could have told me about alternatives earlier or, you know, just different types of resources that are available, that if officers were more aware, maybe they might be able to help more but I feel like the officers aren't as proactive with abuse as they should be."*

Didn't take DV seriously

- *"The deep rooted thought patterns of the police that have been here for a long time and then they're disseminating that to the newer guys. So that's really hard. I wish that we could somehow train police better and prosecutors better and make a point that this is not going to be accepted or tolerated."*

Didn't listen to survivor

- *"When we go to the emergency room to care, they didn't say, 'Let's find somebody. Let's find a domestic violence counselor' . . . It was, 'We are going to call the police.' And then they come in and they want to help but you just got your ass kicked by a dude. And then you get this big burly cop coming in and saying, 'Oh, what happened? I want to know what happened.' And now you're being bossed by a second person who is there to help but right now your perspective is, everybody is in my face. I'm not getting anybody to help me. Nobody is listening. Nobody understands."*

Protective Orders

Helpful Responses	Unhelpful Responses
"Currently, even though it's a piece of paper, my protective order does help me. At least subconsciously. I think it helps me to feel like I have something. If he tries to get to me, or contact me, which he has tried, at least I have some recourse. The law is important to me and feeling safe."	• *"I know that when I had restraining orders, it's a piece of paper. If they were afraid of the law, they wouldn't have done it in the first place. That piece of paper means nothing. And then when I called because it's been violated, and they say, "Well, do you have proof?" How am I supposed to prove that? You want me to take the time to take a picture while he's screaming in my face? Because I'm pretty certain he's going to break my phone and so I'm not going to have any proof. That restraining order is the biggest joke."* • *"My ex violated the protective order almost three years ago and he still has not gone to court for that. And I don't feel like it, I mean, obviously, it did some good to have the protective order because then you can have legal action, but there is no legal action is the problem, you know what I mean? So, then there aren't consequences for the violator."*

Victims' Assistance

Helpful Responses	Unhelpful Responses
"the victim assistance group was helpful. And then we had to stay in a hotel on and off for two weeks. That wasn't a pleasant experience, but they were great with checking in everyday and they provided some gift cards and stuff. The only thing with the whole gift card thing, it was super, super helpful."	*"I did reach out to law enforcement. At which point, they did hook me up with victim's assistance. Unfortunately, she was one human for the entire county. That's just not enough. And you could tell every time you would talk to her that she felt like she was not doing her job well for anybody and not because she didn't want to but because it just wasn't there to do."*

Department of Child Services/Child Protective Services Caseworker

Helpful Responses	Unhelpful Responses
"But everybody that I went to was amazing and I mean everybody was like, oh, and CPS too. CPS was there super, super."	*"they're afraid to report the abuse because they don't want DCS to remove their children. And I feel like DCS sometimes blames the victim for the abuse occurring and maybe not understanding that, yeah, they know the abuse is going on, but it's like sometimes the victim has to choose, you know, I can stay in this situation and know that I'm gonna be alive, you know, or I can try to leave and he might kill me and then my kids have no mother. You know, being just a little more sensitive to that, how dangerous it can be to leave the situation. And the set up of just taking somebody's kids away, you know, working more with the mother on a plan..."*

Judges

Helpful Responses	Unhelpful Responses
" The court was really great about --I mean the judge. I can't remember what judge it was. But he was very direct with us, and was like, 'look dude, you really, really messed up.' He was really hard on him. I think that he needed to hear that from an authority figure...They needed to like wake him up, you know what I mean? A little bit. I wanted that to happen. I was really angry at that time, too. But that's besides the point. But I wanted that accountability, for him to see from someone other than me, or my family, that hey, what you're doing is wrong. You are abusing her. You're gonna have to accept that this is what you have done. That's the only way he could get better, is for him to actually see it as abuse, and realize he had to change that behavior. I honestly think he didn't think it was that bad, until those moments happen with the authority, the court, the police."	• *"The response from the judge made me feel like I was just looked at as the crazy wife who's hormonal. And it also said to me, if the marriage is rocky, it's acceptable for him to put bruises on you. That's what got said to me. So, you leave feeling about an inch tall, like, oh, what? You know what I mean? So, that was the worst response I had. Yeah, I'd say that was the worst."* • *"The judge simply said, there would never be a police officer that would come to your house as long as your name or his name is ran back to back. You're wasting my police officer's time. You're wasting my time. So basically, at that time I was like, she gave him permission to kill me."* • *"I'd love to see more like a judge with acute awareness of what it looks like when there's abuse in the situation."*

Domestic Violence Law/Processes (Negative Responses)

Child custody issues

- *"I mean the biggest thing that always comes up for me is like it's really about my son. I feel like our community or our society doesn't support kids who've been through domestic violence adequately, or kids who are still going through it. I mean my son has to see his dad regularly and despite that he's reported abuse multiple times and has had it investigated, and his dad is just very manipulative and charming and looks very good on paper and people don't believe or I don't know if they don't believe but they say there's nothing that they can do."*
- *"My children were separated from me for a hundred and twenty six days. Because of my husband's lies. He's manipulating the legal system."*

Legal protections inadequate

- **Enhanced charging**
  - *"How come they don't consider that attempted murder when someone chokes you? Or when someone beats the tar out of you?"*
  - *"The laws are too lax for abusers. Abusers are not getting the time they need to give for abusing someone, like they are going to get in for less than 3 years and that could never be probation. That is unacceptable."*
- **No protections for psychological, emotional or financial abuse**
  - *"if there's somebody that's physically abusing you, you can show them and you can get a restraining order, whereas for as the mental abuse is, like there needs to be more that you can do about that to enforce that so that person won't do that...because my ex-wife was verbally abusive, I just don't feel like there's laws to protect...But the thing is social media is out there, and we're going through a lot of the stuff like bullying. I don't think people realize how damaging, how horrible mental abuse is."*
- **Married victims**
  - *"Just being married, your husband has a lot of control over you. Because there are times that I would call—you know, I was married and I was living separately and my husband wasn't on my lease, wasn't in my household, but he would still come over and would cause problems in my home and kinda felt that he had the right to come in and out in my home as he pleased. And when I called the police, the police basically just told me that, "Well, you guys are married. So, you know, even if he's not on your lease, we really can't make him leave. He does have a legal right to be in your home...So, I would like to see more education about that, because I wasn't really aware of that until I was in that situation—because I was married, even though my husband was not a part of my household, the police were still telling me that he had a legal right to be inside my house. And he kicked at my door, he trashed my house. I mean, he did all types of things and they literally would not do anything about it because we were married."*

Domestic Violence Law/Processes Continued

- **Longer mandatory holds/higher cash bonds**
  - *"we just got this new law where if someone gets in jail for a certain law or breaking rules, then they get out on a 500 dollar bond on their own, which is basically 50 dollars. That is going to hold a lot of victims and survivors from stepping forward, because [their abuser] can be out in 72 hours versus being held for longer, keeping them there. So, that is another thing. There is a lot that needs to be addressed like immediately."*
- **Warrants not enforced**
  - *"They had a warrant out for them but unless they got pulled over by the cops or something, nothing was going to be done. My hope would be that if cops were given specific information about where he could be found, the cops would actually go and look for him."*
- **Inadequate monitoring and victim notification**
  - *"He's been on GPS monitoring throughout this entire process and it's not yet over but I don't have faith in our system at all. I get a 10-minute warning when he is in the downtown area which is where I work. Sometimes I don't get any warning. I've discovered instances where he's been downtown and I was not told about it, so I don't have any faith in that system of tracker."*

Timing/delays

- *"a perfect picture would be that if someone report it, it goes through the system quickly. I don't feel like people should have to wait two years to be able to talk about it and to have relived it all. It should be done--a victim should be able to ask for a speedy trial. It shouldn't just be the perpetrator. And our judicial system perpetrators have way too much power. And I think that's a huge hurdle for a victim and it just discourages victims to even say anything because [they] don't wanna go back in two years and have to relive everything. I don't wanna have to go to court two and three times and have a continuance. I think there should be a limit on that as well, continuances. It's not fair to anybody in that situation."*

Money, poverty and justice

- *"I was married to him. Because he makes $500,000 a year, can have the best attorneys ever and I don't get any help like that? Once again, money talks, money, money, money. Because by rights, he should be in jail too. He was a monster. He was a monster with money."*

Charges for defensive violence

- *"Not charge a damn woman if she hits back."*

Gun laws

- *"one in three relationships involve guns. I am really trying to change gun laws and abuse...We have to hold our abusers accountable for what they are doing. The laws are too lax for abusers."*

Property valued over people

- *"Unfortunately, with my experience, it wasn't enough that he beat me to a pulp the judge was going to let him out, but then, when I said, 'Well, what about my things?' Things like slashing my tires and cutting my phone wire so I couldn't make a call. And oh, well now, I got their attention and now they wanted to keep him in jail because of the items but not because of what he did to me."*

No Accountability/No Response (Negative Responses)

- *"The person who is holding him accountable is the judge, the police officers, the detectives. They weren't holding him accountable for anything so guess what? This behavior at some point is going to start again, because no one is being held accountable for it. If moms are not holding him accountable, uncles are not holding him accountable, nobody is saying anything, and this situation seems to be ok. So just they are letting them know this behavior is ok."*
- *"I find more often than not, they're embraced. More so than the victims. And I'm not sure why. The abuser is embraced. "Oh, I'm so sorry, she put you in jail. That bitch put you in jail." It's not ever their fault. Until such a time that there's no denying that it's their fault. And sometimes that point is too late."*
- *"There's really nothing we can do about the guy I dated because his dad was a pillar of the community. At the time they're not going to pursue it. Because there's no way his son would do that."*

Court Staff (Negative Responses)

- *"When I went to the courthouse to file a protection order, they told me that I couldn't file one because [abuser] had already filed one and that protects both of us. This is one story that I got then when I called the police department they said, well, it doesn't protect you. This is just to hit on him. You have to go file your own. But then the ladies at the courthouse still wouldn't let me do it."*

Attorneys/Prosecutors (Negative Responses)

- *""The prosecutor was not helpful. And I realize that he had a job to do. And that is prosecute to the fullest extent every time. But when I say I don't want to press charges because this has failed me before and you can't give me any guarantee that it's not going to fail or it's not going to put me into danger, I have a problem with that. And it didn't matter what I wanted. His job was to prosecute and that was the end of it. And I didn't matter."*
- *"I told her I suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, and she's like 'You don't look sick.' What? Now when we first started the situation, I explained to you domestic violence and asked you, if you got it and you said you did, you don't . . . So I finally found an attorney that listens and that gets it."*

Community Accountability (Negative Responses)

- *"Honestly, it's hatred. Whoever does the abuse and the family finds out, the community finds out, rumors go around, they get hated on for mental, physical. That makes it worse because then they get more angry and people automatically judge them for their decision to abuse."*
- *"I don't know why his family accepts that because it seemed to be a response from them. They just carry on, like everything's fine, you know. And I understand people, initially, that's what you're supposed to do. But it would have helped if there was something like why you did it. We did not approve of it or something like that would have made me feel a little bit better. Not necessarily for myself, but for him to know that like, he's gotta stop doing this."*

Batterers' Intervention Programs (Negative Responses)

- *"Somebody needs to change that law [BIP adjudication] here, because there's no way somebody could get cured in six months, because you could sit in that class and listen all you want and pretend that you're good. Anybody can do that. So, that makes me very anxious and angry and upset."*
- *"And there's no accountability when they fail. I think that's bull. I think they need to have accountability because so many of them were coming there and they will say what they're supposed to say and do what they're supposed to do. Graduate the program and go right back to square one and not get any better. Because I've heard them say. 'Oh, well, I just told them this, this, and this and I graduated the program.' And we're back."*

Incarceration (Negative Responses)

- *"Who's gonna be his victim when he gets out? It's not gonna be me, but it's gonna be a girl like I was two years ago and that's horrible. And I feel like they just lock him in a cage and they're like, OK, well, the public should be happy because they're locked up right now. They're gonna let them back out later and then they've learned even more ways to be vicious while they're in there. So, it's easy to be mad and be hurt and want them to suffer and to pay, but that doesn't help society and that doesn't heal anything and there's no closure in that, for me at least. If I knew that he was getting help, I would probably feel a little better."*

Guardian Ad Litem (Negative Responses)

- *The GAL, I can't say enough, about how harmful she was to my family . . . Damaging because they don't understand domestic violence."*

How survivors were affected by the responses/interventions they received

Consequences of positive experiences (6)

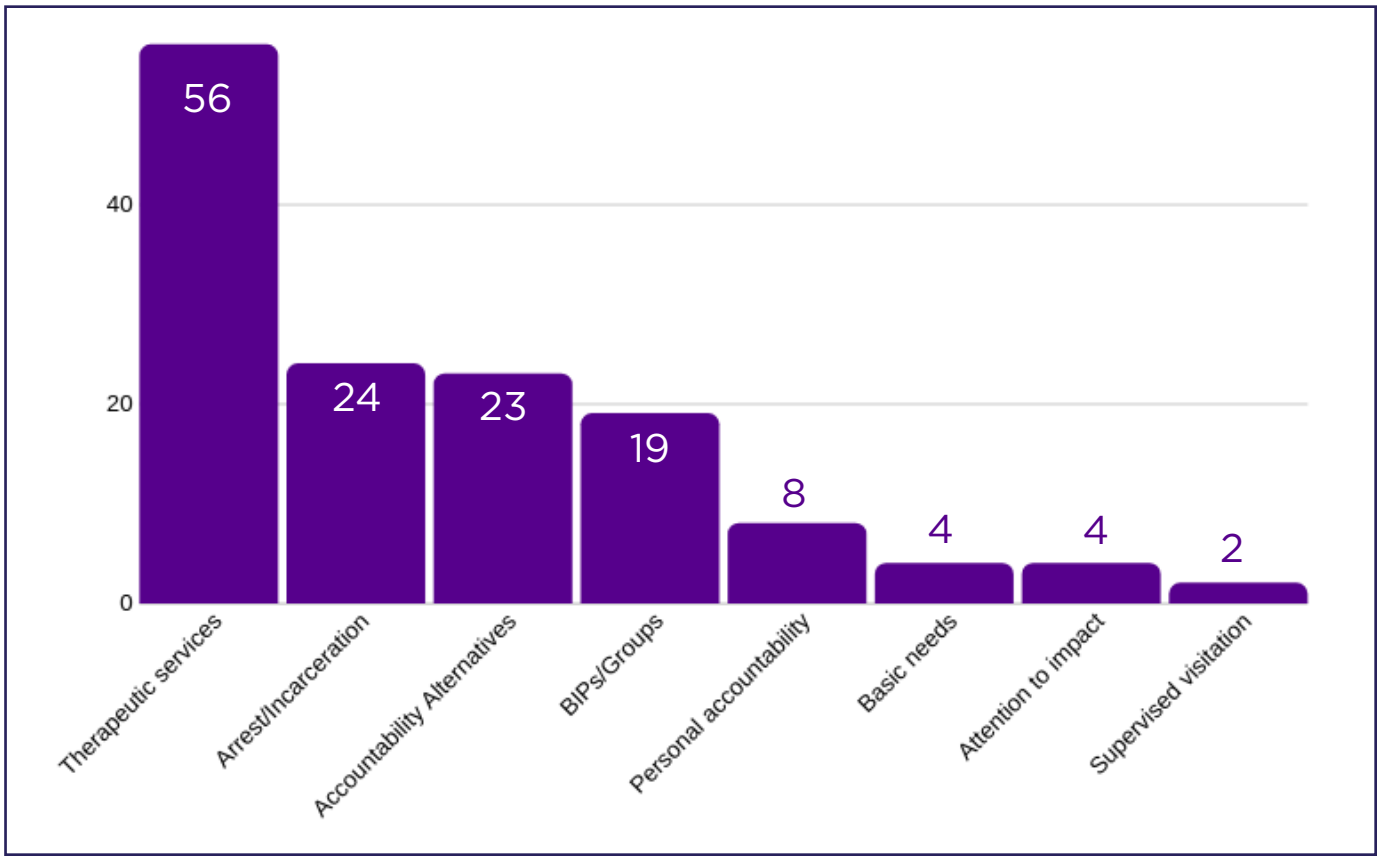
- Felt heard/cared about (2)
- Felt strong/empowered (2)
- Had confidence in the system (1)
- Felt safer (1)

Consequences of negative experiences (46)

- Loss of trust (15)
  - In the system (12)
  - In people (3)
- Felt helpless (7)
- Felt angry (7)
- Started self-medicating (5)
- Didn't feel heard/believed (4)
- Felt they deserved it/blamed (4)
- Felt sad (3)
- Returned to the relationship (1)

How survivors think people who use abuse should be held accountable

We asked survivors how they thought that people who use abuse should be held accountable for that behavior. Survivors reflected on their feelings about the place of punishment and also for restoration/change. For about a quarter of the survivors we spoke with, legal accountability (criminal and civil justice remedies including protective orders, arrest, incarceration, etc) felt like the appropriate or necessary response to the problem of domestic violence. The remaining three quarters of respondents were casting about for alternative solutions that could help survivors to feel supported and safe while also fostering better outcomes for offenders. Some survivors recommended a combination of interventions in order to effectively address the complexity of abusive behavior and also to satisfy their feelings around punishment and rehabilitation.



Therapeutic Services

In describing the need for therapeutic services for offenders, survivors focused on the need to get at the roots of the problem in order to promote change. They believed that abusive behavior was driven by personal experiences of adversity and violence. They also pointed to the need for addiction treatment as part of therapeutic services.

> *I think that there needs to be some type of mandated counseling, one-on-one, not group, because this person has some things that they need to get out. There needs to be a program and not just one. It has to be several programs to kind of really initiate where this root of the problem is. Because we're not gonna end it if we're not finding out what the root of the problem is.*

> *They don't abuse people for no reason. They need support to get over whatever is causing them to do this. They deserve just as much support as the person they abused. They need resources and support; judging and getting angry with them doesn't help. They need help to work on those things and their mental problems. If not, the cycle will just go on and on if they don't get the help they need. I think it's hard for some people to believe that abusers need help and support too. They don't want to come out and ask for help because they don't wantI"m to get in trouble for what they are doing. They need an opportunity to share these things.*
>
> *I think it was just disappointing that I didn't feel like he was getting the help he needed. And like he had a drinking problem, and he would even admit that several times, you know, 'I'm an alcoholic,' but yet would never go to any sort of treatment program. Nothing. Not even an outpatient. So that was disappointing because I feel like if you're on the other side and he's saying, 'I'm an alcoholic,' you should help him vigorously pursue something to help with that, right?*

Arrest/Incarceration

Survivors that identified arrest/incarceration as an appropriate solution focused on the need to strengthen the criminal justice accountability net. These survivors discussed the importance of existing laws being appropriately applied and enforced by law enforcement and the courts. They also described the need for enhanced charging—generally when they didn't believe that legal consequences were commensurate with the harms that they had experienced, and particularly in cases with repeat offenses.

> *I think that they should go to prison or jail. That's the name of the correctional facility. Whatever help they need, they can get it in there. I think they need to be locked up and held accountable for our lives. My life is valuable.*
>
> *They go to this program, and they do good, and answer and talk and all blah, blah, blah. Then, that incident gets taken off of their record. Meanwhile, well, I'm still suffering from a broken arm. But they're walking around scott-free.*
>
> *I think that, obviously, if you do the crime you do the time.*

Accountability alternatives

Many survivors discussed the inadequacy of the criminal justice system to effectively respond to the complex problem of violence. Their concerns included the sense that the system didn't foster change among those who behave abusively and didn't necessarily help them to feel safer. Some didn't want that level of consequence for the person who harmed them—they just wanted strategies that would help them to change. They expressed frustration about the lack of alternative solutions and brainstormed ideas including restorative justice, and community accountability strategies.

We have some excellent programs to help victims and survivors, but we do not have programs to help the abusers. We'll just land, oh, we don't wanna help them. We're just gonna put them in jail. Well, I'm sorry, the jail system is not set up to help people. It really makes them more angry. So, that's what I think."

I just wanted him to stop doing what he was going, but that's not realistic I guess. I always wished there was a way to make him stop without him getting in trouble.

I don't think jail or prison is right for anybody. I don't care if you're the abuser or the abused. I don't believe being locked up helps anybody. I think it makes them worse.

Restorative justice

They should be out there doing community service within the community that they disrupted that's what they should be doing.

I think for him, there's this notion or this program that I've heard of called, I think it's called restorative justice. And they have people who have committed a crime, goes in and talk to not necessarily their victim but victims who have experienced the same sort of thing . . . And I think for him having him sit down and listen to somebody else talk about how much that destroys your life.

Community Accountability

So showing them what a good example is or what we as a community expect you to be, and participate, and function in order to be involved with us, no child left behind, no person left alone...you walk up to them and shake their hand, you do not let them alone, you do not let them get away with thinking that they can continue to do it. We need the man down the street to come knock on my abuser's door, and to tell him that it's not accepted by him, or his brothers, or his father, or his pastor, or anyone around in that community...This is showing them that they are valued. There is value and there is hope for you. There is a chance for you. There is opportunity for you. Let's get you to where you really need to be.

I think if she was just held accountable by more of her family, friends, and if we could teach that to people, teach that to the community, teach that to family members and friends that it's important to be an accountability partner to an abusive family member.

You are a part of the problem when you don't say anything. When you sat there and saw this occur but you decide I am not going out there because I don't want to have any problems. I don't want anybody's stepping on my doorstep. I don't want anybody harassing me. Saying all these things, we know we have to stop being worried about what people are thinking and start helping the problem. Because a lot of situations can be avoided because a lot of this stuff happens at homes, in the neighborhoods and at schools, churches. It's happening everywhere.

Batterers Intervention Programs (BIPs)

For some survivors, specialized education about abuse felt like a productive solution to help those who cause harm to understand the dynamics and consequences of their behavior. For them, understanding and recognition were important components of accountability and behavior change.

> *It's just because a lot of, let's say, counseling doesn't always work with abusers because they don't think that they have a problem, but I do believe that, you know, there's potential for abusers to change. I've seen it, it's not—I don't know if it's common, but it does happen. So, I would say a lot of these abusers have grown up and families, that's what they've seen, that's what they think of as normal. So, an intervention for abusive persons, I would think, would just start with, one: you know, being non-judgmental, because no one is gonna want to receive help from somebody who's crucifying them or being judgmental towards them. But, you know, just a lot of education about healthy relationships again, because they, you know, they may not really have ever seen a healthy relationship.*
>
> *I think more batterers intervention programs for those individuals and maybe even for it to be free because I know a lot of people can't afford even $25 a week. And I understand that. I don't know if that would make them more willing to do it but it could be a start.*

Personal accountability

In discussing the desire for personal accountability, survivors said that they wanted the person who hurt them to "get it." Elements of personal accountability that they described included acknowledging that they had caused harm, recognizing the scope of the harms that they had caused, expressing some sense of remorse, and offering an apology.

> *I've wanted him to understand how I felt. I didn't want any of our friends to hate him or be against him or anything like that. Because I know that he ended up being, feeling like he was totally alone in the end. I just wanted him to understand how I felt and what he did. When he'd write me letters and text me he kept saying this tough love you've given me these last two weeks, or this last month, it's not tough love. I'm done, I'm gone. He couldn't understand that. I just don't really think he realized what he did to me. I just don't think he did, and I that's what I wish more than anything that he could have understood that.*
>
> *I've always wanted him to like really, really, be sorry. I really want him to see, like every time I have a black eye or busted mouth or just bruises everywhere. I wanted him to, like, literally stop, see me and be like I'm so sorry. You know what I'm saying? I want him to actually admit, and want to seek help.*

Closing Thoughts

At the close of each interview, we asked survivors whether there was anything else that they wanted domestic violence advocates to know—if there were topics that we hadn't asked about, or just takeaway points that they wanted us to understand.

What Survivors Want Us to Know:

1. **Compassionate, competent response is critical (29)**
2. **Recovery takes time (10)**
3. **Self-healing and restoration (7)**
4. **Harassment continues (3)**
5. **Create inclusive programs — competent to serve across a range of identities and experiences (4)**
6. **They are grateful for our work (4)**
7. **There is hope; things are getting better/safer (3)**
8. **Community agencies should collaborate to create more safe places for survivors (3)**
9. **Systems are hard on survivors (2)**
10. **We should normalize and address "going back" in our services and safety planning (1)**
11. **The connections between violence and substance abuse (1)**
12. **They are concerned about the intergeneration cycle of violence and their kids' futures (1)**

1. Compassionate, competent response

Throughout the course of our interviews, survivors told us that multiple systemic and normative barriers make it very difficult to reach out for support. When they are able to reach out, interventions that are perceived as compassionate and competent were essential for facilitating their next steps—by supporting their confidence in themselves, their belief in the possibility of change, and also their feelings of competence in navigating support and accountability systems. This point cannot be overstated. Survivors told us over and over that they felt frightened, confused and overwhelmed when reaching out; speaking with someone who was patient, warm and knowledgeable introduced the possibility of a different future.

2. Recovery takes time

Survivors want us to understand that the process of recovering from abuse takes time. They noted that services, support and compassion are often only available to them in the acute period immediately following a separation. In discussing the period of recovery, they describe challenges around recovering their own sense of emotional wellbeing and life stability. They also point out that harassment often continues after their separation from the relationship.

> *Just that it can stay with you your entire life. I mean, I'm talking about something that happened over 25 years ago and I'm just now dealing with it and just now getting the right treatment.*
>
> *Just like the intrusion of him into my life, whether it's taking me to court frequently or, you know, sending things over email, or showing up in places where he knows I'm going to be and things like that.*
>
> *And the thing is, with my ex-wife, I meet new people and I meet new friends, and I don't know how she finds out about these people. Because, still, even on social media, I have to lead kind of a sheltered life. My ex-wife, she would manipulate something to try to figure out how to get on to my social media to figure out what's going on in my life.*

Conclusion and Next Steps

With the conclusion of this first phase of our work to re-center domestic violence services and community safety strategies in survivor defined success, we feel encouraged by the action steps that have already been initiated at state and local levels, and hopeful about the next steps that we will take in collaboration with survivors, domestic violence programs and community partners. As we go forward, we maintain our commitment to work in accountable relationship with survivors, and to be guided by the needs of survivors who have been the most marginalized.

With the advice provided by survivors through this project we commit to advocating for public investment and policies that promote community safety for all of us. We commit to piloting new service and accountability strategies that align with survivors' needs, and to center survivors' perspectives as we evaluate the impacts of those programs. We commit to disseminating learnings about the strategies that we try with colleagues in Indiana and nationally. Finally, we commit to moving funding structures and service guidelines to reinforce the delivery of programs that align with the needs and expectations described by the survivors who partnered with us on this project.

To view the **Focus Group Discussion Guide, Interview Questionnaire (English)** and **Interview Questionnaire (Spanish)**, please visit **www.icadvinc.org/movement**