


2023 & 2024 POLICY AGENDA



INTRODUCTION

This policy agenda intends to address multiple structural and systemic factors which contribute to domestic violence, and the intersectional nature of our priorities positions our work alongside other social justice movements. This two-year agenda is informed by the feedback received from domestic violence service providers and survivors across the state through survey responses and listening sessions, as well as ongoing collaboration with allied organizational partners.



Domestic violence is a systemic issue, impacting individuals, families, their communities and societal culture as a whole. State-level policies and action are essential to changing the social conditions that can lead to violence, and providing an effective response once it has occurred. Our policy work combines strategic leadership, where we center solutions to the impacts of domestic violence, with strategic allyship, where we stand in solidarity with allied causes. We are committed to advancing real solutions that promote safety as well as healing with a holistic approach.



Funding & Program Requirements

Domestic violence service providers need adequate and stable funding in order to fully serve their communities. We work to ensure that funding is available and easily accessible for all providers.



Economic Justice

Economic stability is central to healing for survivors and their families, and can protect against violence from ever occurring. Our policy work strives to create opportunities for survivors to experience stability and thrive financially, and includes collaborative work with social justice partners to increase the economic well-being for all Californians. This work includes strengthening our social safety net programs CalWORKs and CalFresh, improving paid leave policies and benefits for survivors and families, and addressing the negative impacts of economic abuse on survivors' stability.



Prevention

Domestic violence is not inevitable and can be prevented before it occurs. Our policy work focuses on reducing systemic factors and cultural beliefs that can lead to violence, and enhancing the protective factors that strengthen communities and lessen the likelihood of violence and abuse. This work includes supporting community-based work and healthy relationship education.



Addressing the Criminal Legal System

Survivors deserve the right to access safety, support, and resources without being required to engage with our criminal legal system unless they choose to do so. Recognizing that many survivors do not want to engage with this system and the harms that many experience when forced to do so, we support the development of alternative approaches to survivor safety and efforts to reduce systemic reliance on the criminal system to address domestic violence. For survivors who do choose to engage with the criminal legal system, we strive to ensure they receive equitable, appropriate responses.



Housing & Homelessness

Survivors and their families deserve safe, stable, and affordable housing. When survivors do experience homelessness, housing discrimination, and unaffordable housing, our state's systems must respond in ways that address their specific needs.



Advocacy at the Intersections

We support policy change to advance reproductive justice, promote immigrant justice, support Native communities, and end gun violence. Survivors' identities are intersectional, and the work to end domestic violence must include work across social justice movements. Our efforts work to create a world free of oppression where all people are able to thrive are deeply connected.



FUNDING & PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Addressing domestic violence requires ample stable funding and resources. Domestic violence service providers rely on a fragmented system of federal, state, local and private funding to provide essential, life-saving services to their community. Funding often comes with burdensome administrative requirements that shifts time and resources away from their work to support survivors and their families, and funding consistently falls short of the true need. Prevention funding remains scarce, with no ongoing state general fund support and strict limitations on utilizing federal funds for prevention. With full funding and reduced administrative barriers, domestic violence programs can better implement responsive, community-based programs that meet the needs of those they serve.



PRIORITIES:



1. Ensure ongoing, stable funding for domestic violence programs, including:
 - Protecting current state general funds for domestic violence programs
 - Advocating for increases in federal funding through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), and supporting the development of new funding specific for communities of color



2. Improve nonprofit-government contracting processes to reduce barriers to funding and ease administrative barriers on programs.



3. Work in collaboration with [ValorUS](#), [Alliance for Boys and Men of Color](#) and the [Culturally Responsive Domestic Violence Network](#) on a [unified budget request](#) to secure funding for:
 - Ongoing funding for domestic & sexual violence prevention
 - Innovative interventions and culturally rooted approaches
 - Removing reliance on criminal system fines and fees to fund victim services and ensure stable general fund support for these essential services
 - Establishing a senior advisor on violence prevention



4. Increase the inclusion of domestic violence service providers in homelessness funding opportunities in recognition of the work these organizations do to serve homeless survivors.



5. Expand access to state funding through the Domestic Violence Assistance Program (DVAP), working in coordination with the [Cal OES Domestic Violence Advisory Council](#) and the field of domestic violence service providers.

ONGOING WORK:

1. Advise Cal OES on funding priorities and implementation through Partnership staff participation on the Domestic Violence Advisory Council (DVAC), VAWA STOP Committee, and VOCA Steering Committee.
2. Advocate along with national partners for funding specific to communities of color, culturally specific organizations, and traditionally unserved/underserved communities.
3. Support increased funding for legal aid services.



PREVENTION

It is possible to change the conditions that lead to violence, and prevent it from ever occurring. Preventing domestic violence in California is a central goal for the Partnership. Creating this transformational change includes work at the individual, community, and societal levels, and our policy efforts reflect each of these components.

We are committed to supporting community-based prevention efforts by creating a stable funding source for their work. The current reality of limited, one-time, inconsistent funding dedicated to prevention work has made it challenging for organizations to establish prevention programs that can sustain long-term work within their communities. With higher funding levels and the stability of consistent funds, prevention work can flourish statewide.

Our prevention policy goals also include ensuring that California's youth have access to education about how to form healthy relationships to reduce the prevalence of dating and domestic violence for these generations. This work includes supporting youth of all genders and addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ youth. Our prevention work also focuses on increasing economic security for families during times of stress as a protective factor against abuse by expanding access to paid leave programs.



PRIORITIES:



1. Secure state funding for prevention approaches in collaboration with [ValorUS](#), [Alliance for Boys and Men of Color](#) and the [Culturally Responsive Domestic Violence Network](#). In 2023, our comprehensive budget request includes [\\$20 million for domestic and sexual violence prevention](#).



2. Improve and expand the education California's students receive about healthy relationships and dating violence. This work will include strengthening the implementation of the California Healthy Youth Act.



3. Expand and improve access to California's Paid Family Leave program, paid sick and safe days, and support additional policy changes to provide economic supports to families.

ONGOING WORK:

The Partnership has a history of work on each priority area listed. Since 2018, the Partnership has worked alongside partner organizations to advocate for ongoing domestic and sexual violence prevention funding in the state budget, securing \$10 million in 2018, \$5 million in 2019, and \$15 million in 2022. We supported the passage of the California Healthy Youth Act which included healthy relationship education and supported its implementation by providing recommendations to the California Department of Education about content to include in its Health Education Framework. The Partnership is also an active member of the [California Work & Family Coalition](#), a statewide alliance of community organizations, unions, non-profits, and individuals dedicated to helping parents, caregivers, and families thrive.



HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

Safe, stable housing is an essential component for survivors' well-being and can provide a survivor with the ability to heal from the experience of abuse. Housing insecurity is a primary reason why survivors across genders and age ranges stay in abusive relationships and why children continue to be exposed to domestic violence - a key risk factor for future perpetration and chronic health conditions. Unstable housing and homelessness make survivors and children vulnerable to new forms of violence, creating a still greater risk that the cycle of violence will continue into new generations.

57% of all homeless women report domestic violence as the immediate cause of their homelessness.¹ 18,559 domestic violence survivors and children stayed in California's domestic violence emergency shelters in FY20-21.² Across the country, people of color experience homelessness at far greater rates than White people. In recent research by the Center for Social Innovation, approximately



two-thirds of people experiencing homelessness in the study's communities were Black (64.7%), while 28.0% were White. 6.9% identified as Hispanic/Latinx*. In total 78.3% of people experiencing homelessness were people of color. Rates of homelessness for American Indian/Alaska Natives were also disproportionately high; homelessness among American Indian/Alaskan Natives was three to eight times higher than their proportion of the general population.³ Women of color are also at greater risk of experiencing domestic violence. Despite the clear linkage between domestic violence and homelessness, too often the policy conversations about these issues are separate and siloed.

Housing insecurity and domestic violence are fundamentally linked - neither can be solved without addressing the other. Solving the housing and homelessness crisis for survivors and all Californians requires an array of approaches. Our policy work includes efforts to ensure that California's homelessness funding and systems respond to the specific needs of survivors and will focus on solutions that support survivors in finding and maintaining safe, stable housing.

PRIORITIES:



1. Secure survivor-specific access to housing, including funding for emergency vouchers, [Domestic Violence Housing First](#), and other approaches.



2. Address barriers that keep survivors from being safely and stably housed, including low credit scores, high security deposits, and Fair Market Rent calculations.



3. Provide training and technical assistance for programs to effectively advocate for the needs of survivors to their local Continuums of Care, City Councils, or Boards of Supervisors.



4. Improvements to the state's homelessness planning and responses to ensure domestic violence survivors are fully included. This work includes implementation of [SB 914 \(Rubio, 2022\)](#).



5. Shift the narrative to increase understanding about the intersection of domestic violence with housing insecurity and homelessness, to position survivors and service providers as central to policy responses.



6. Expand and deepen collaboration with local movements and advocates, county, state, and national housing, and homelessness agencies.

ONGOING WORK:

1. Facilitate and participate in the [Housing Opportunities Mean Everything \(HOME\) Cohort](#) of domestic violence programs, funded through the Women's Foundation California to focus on improved system outcomes for survivors experiencing homelessness.
2. Support funding for eviction defense and homelessness prevention legal services.
3. Support efforts to increase the availability of long-term rental subsidies and affordable housing and elevate the ways a lack of housing harms survivors.
4. Advocate alongside national partners to improve Housing and Urban Development (HUD) response to domestic violence.
5. Promote how a range of housing services is successful in preventing or reducing homelessness, including advocacy for [Domestic Violence Housing First](#) programs and funding.
6. Create spaces for peer to peer learning and information sharing among Members working on these issues.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Survivors and families experiencing domestic violence deserve a solid financial foundation and the ability to build wealth and economic freedom. When survivors of domestic violence have stable access to resources that help them build economic resiliency, they and their families are much more likely to remain safe and secure.

Financial abuse occurs in 99% of domestic violence cases⁴ and can include stealing money, credit, property, or identity from a partner. It may also include forcing a partner to file fraudulent legal financial documents or overspend on credit cards.⁵ Abusive partners can incur debt without a survivor's consent, or coerce a survivor into incurring the debt, by threats of harm. This debt and poor credit score resulting from financial abuse impact can have long-term consequences for survivors, creating barriers to education, housing and employment opportunities.

Research shows that access to economic resources is the most likely predictor of whether a survivor will be able to permanently separate from their abusive partner.⁶ In a 2012 survey, of the 85% of victims who returned to their abusive partners, a significant number cited an inability to address their finances.⁷

In addition to being a central component of well-being for survivors and their families, increasing economic security for families can act as a protective factor to reduce the likelihood of abuse ever occurring.



PRIORITIES:



1. Increase the availability and affordability of child care to support survivors' ability to work, or obtain higher education while providing high quality care for their children.



2. Develop solutions to litigation abuse in the family court system, which can result in significant legal fees and loss of income through time away from work.



3. Support the implementation of [SB 975 \(Min, 2022\)](#) to provide survivors with relief from coerced debt.



4. As an active member of the [Work & Family Coalition](#), advocate for paid leave policies to help survivors, individuals, parents, and families have the time and resources to care for themselves and each other.



5. Serve as a [Stronger California](#) steering committee member and actively support the coalition priorities to combat poverty and build assets, achieve workplace justice and family-friendly workplaces, and expand access to affordable, quality child care.

ONGOING WORK:

1. Collaborate with anti-poverty programs to address access to public benefits.
2. Participate on the [California Victim Compensation Board \(CalVCB\)](#) Advisory Committee.



ADDRESSING THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

In order to achieve safety and healing for all survivors and their families, we must develop alternatives to the criminal legal system. The Partnership is committed to supporting de-centering criminal legal responses in favor of survivor & community-led solutions to prevent and end domestic violence.

This section of our policy agenda focuses on supporting the development of alternative responses and accountability by those who commit harm without relying on a carceral response. We also seek to eliminate ways in which survivors are forced to engage with the criminal system when they would otherwise choose not to, in order to provide survivors with true choices. We recognize that too often survivors themselves are criminalized, and our priorities include working to improve how our systems respond to the needs of these survivors.

Our current criminal legal system fails to achieve true safety and healing, and disproportionately harms Black, Indigenous & Native, and People of Color. A 2022 study by the National Domestic Violence Hotline illuminated a number of the challenges survivors experience with law enforcement responses. 39% of survivors surveyed reported they felt less safe after calling the law enforcement, compared to 20% of survivors who felt safer. 77% of survivors were afraid to call law enforcement again, but 62% say they would, largely because they felt law enforcement was their only option. When asked if other resources had been available, would they have chosen them over calling the police, 71% of survivors answered yes. Responses to the Partnership's 2022 policy survey and perspectives shared during our listening sessions on this topic echo the same challenges, as well as also highlighting the ways in which survivors are arrested and criminalized.

PRIORITIES:



1. Support the advancement of alternatives to the current law enforcement response.



2. Ensure survivors can access healthcare services by creating a survivor-centered, trauma-informed approach and limit non-consensual and potentially dangerous referrals to law enforcement.



3. Address the needs of criminalized survivors by allowing courts to consider the experiences of survivors of trauma, domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking throughout legal proceedings in all cases.



4. Develop a strategic vision for improving California's Batterer Intervention Program structure and oversight to fully support behavior change and healing.



5. Advance solutions to the harms survivors and their children experience when involved with the child welfare system, including addressing the issue of failure to protect.

ONGOING WORK:

1. Oppose increased criminalization efforts.
2. Support changes to eliminate requirements for survivors to engage with the criminal system to access needed safety and benefits, including access to Victim Compensation.
3. Continue to examine the array of grant requirements for MOUs between domestic violence programs and criminal system entities, and advance both administrative and legislative change to remove these mandates where appropriate.



ADVOCACY AT THE INTERSECTIONS

We are committed to supporting policy change that advances reproductive justice, immigrant justice, supports Native communities, and ends gun violence. We recognize that survivors' identities are intersectional, and the work to end domestic violence must include work across social justice movements. Our efforts to create a world free of oppression where all people are able to thrive are deeply connected.

PRIORITIES:



1. Reproductive justice: Ending violence in California and beyond must include working to protect everyone's human rights, including the rights to have full autonomy over our bodies; to have or not have children; to birth and/or parent our children with dignity; and to live and/or raise a family in a safe, healthy environment.

Many survivors who experience intimate partner violence also experience reproductive and sexual coercion.⁸ An estimated 20% of pregnant partners experience violence during their pregnancy, and the likelihood of physical violence increases 2-4x if the pregnancy is unintended.⁹ The leading cause of death among pregnant people is homicide, especially for Black women.¹⁰



2. Immigrant justice: Our immigration laws create barriers to safety for survivors, who often lack the resources needed to leave an abusive relationship as the result of systemic barriers, lack of language access, social isolation, and lack of financial resources. As a tactic of control, people who cause harm often use their partners' immigration status and fear of deportation to continue the abuse. Our work includes advocacy for policies that support survivors' safety and ability to remain in their communities.



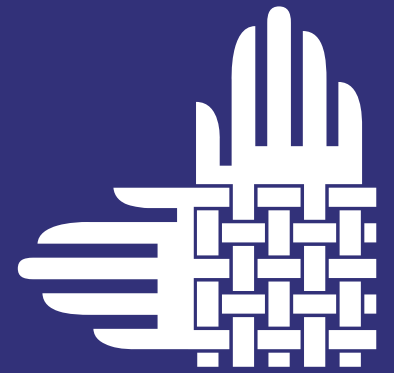
3. Supporting Native communities: Indigenous people are far more likely to experience violent crimes compared to other ethnicities, and more than 80% of Indigenous women experience violence in their lifetimes.¹¹ We will work in coalition with Native tribes and communities to support Native led solutions for safety and security including addressing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People crisis.



4. Ending gun violence: When firearms are present in a situation where domestic violence is being perpetrated, a survivor is more likely to experience an increase in severe physical abuse, and more likely to end up killed than in situations where firearms are not present. A person who causes harm's access to a firearm poses a serious threat to victims, making it five times more likely that a survivor will be killed.¹² In total, a firearm is used in over half of domestic violence homicides nationwide.¹³ Within these devastating statistics are significant racial disparities. Black women are twice as likely to be shot and killed by an intimate partner in comparison to white women.¹⁴ Our work includes collaboration with partners in the movement to prevent gun violence to strengthen California's legal protections to reduce the presence of firearms in these dangerous situations. The Partnership is also committed to increasing survivors', communities', and advocates' understanding about tools to reduce gun violence, and has developed a toolkit and resources on this issue, available [here](#).

ENDNOTES

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Questions about this agenda? Contact policy@cpedv.org for more information.