



CALIFORNIA  
**PARTNERSHIP TO END  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Together, We're Stronger.



2021 & 2022  
**POLICY  
AGENDA**

# INTRODUCTION

**Domestic violence impacts us all.**

**2020 brought unparalleled challenges for domestic violence programs, survivors, and communities across California as we grapple with the impacts of the coronavirus on our lives and economy, a critically needed racial justice reckoning, devastating wildfires, and more. These immense and ongoing needs are at the center of our plans for the 2021-2022 legislative session. We recognize the urgent need for meaningful action across a range of issue areas impacting our communities and our member programs and are committed to advancing real solutions.**



**IN 2018-19 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS  
IN CALIFORNIA...**



RECEIVED NEARLY

**80,000**

TWENTY-FOUR HOUR  
CRISIS LINE CALLS



PROVIDED EMERGENCY SHELTER  
SERVICES TO

**18,808**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
SURVIVORS AND THEIR  
CHILDREN FOR



**645,863**

BED NIGHTS

**IN JUST ONE DAY IN 2019, CALIFORNIA  
PROGRAMS...**



PROVIDED SERVICES TO

**5,644**

SURVIVORS



THERE WERE

**1,236**

UNMET REQUESTS ON THAT  
SAME DAY

**51%**

OF THOSE REQUESTS WERE  
FOR HOUSING SERVICES





### Funding & Program Requirements

- Advocate for COVID-19 relief funding for DV programs and survivors.
- Ensure ongoing, stable funding for DV programs.
- Seek out opportunities for prevention funding.
- Continue exploring opportunities to expand the types of DV programs eligible for state funding through the Domestic Violence Assistance Program.
- Begin strategic planning for a shift away from reliance on fines and fees assessed to individuals convicted of DV.



### Housing & Homelessness

- Secure survivor-dedicated funding within state homelessness funding.
- Shift the narrative to increase understanding by policymakers about the intersection of DV and homelessness.
- Position the Partnership and its members as a key stakeholder in homelessness policy.
- Increase eviction protections for survivors.



### Economic Justice

- Create remedies for survivors dealing with impacts of financial abuse, including incurred debt.
- Mitigate the impact of poor credit for survivors by reducing systemic barriers to make it easier and faster for survivors to repair or rebuild their credit.
- Review and comprehensively update the Safe at Home Program to address barriers to survivor participation and increase access.
- Ongoing: partner with advocacy organizations and government agencies to address child care needs.



### Addressing the Criminal Legal System

- Support the advancement of alternative responses to the current 9-1-1/law enforcement response.
- Support the development of alternative responses to accountability through restorative and transformative justice approaches.
- Re-examine the array of grant requirements for MOUs between DV programs and criminal system entities.
- Support changes to eliminate requirements for survivors to engage with the criminal system to access needed safety and benefits.



### Prevention & Immigration

- Elevate the issue of prevention and the need for legislative support and dedicated funding, through events including annual Orange Day briefings.
- Seek out funding opportunities to support prevention efforts.
- Advocate for policies that support immigrant survivors' access to the range of benefits and resources.
- Actively oppose policy which creates additional barriers for immigrant survivors.
- Support policy to develop options for immigrant survivors to access relief and protection without requiring engagement with the criminal legal system.



These specific topic areas were identified to address the structural and systemic factors which contribute to domestic violence, and the intersectional nature of our priorities positions our work alongside other social justice movements. Our policy work combines strategic leadership where we center the impacts of domestic violence with strategic allyship, recognizing the issues where domestic violence survivors are part of a bigger we that requires us to stand together in solidarity. This policy agenda is also grounded in recognition that the lived experience of people of color differs from that of white people, and that it is essential for our work to recognize the disproportionate, systemic impact of these issues on people of color. Racial justice advocacy will continue to be an essential element of our work.

This two-year agenda is informed by the feedback received from the Partnership's Members, including 73 responses to our [policy survey](#) and [listening sessions](#) held to further discuss economic justice, housing and homelessness, and addressing the criminal legal system. We also incorporated feedback received directly from survivors through our first-ever [survivor policy survey](#). More than 200 survivors responded, identifying issues they've experienced and suggesting policy changes. The Partnership's Policy Team and [Policy Advisory Council](#) worked closely together to analyze the feedback and develop the agenda below. We are grateful for everyone's contribution to developing this agenda.

Achieving our goals will take all of us, and we look forward to working with you all to enact meaningful public policy. For more information about our policy agenda, contact the Partnership's Policy Team at [policy@cpedv.org](mailto:policy@cpedv.org).



# FUNDING & PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

COVID-19 has placed unprecedented strain on state and local budgets, including a record \$54 billion deficit for the state budget for Fiscal Year 20-21. Experts have forecasted a recession and slow recovery taking years, and the timeline for any recovery remains uncertain without an effective vaccine or virus mitigation strategy. COVID-19 has also resulted in increased expenses for domestic violence programs and highlighted the need for additional investment in these critical services and prevention programs. We will focus on the federal level when advocating for increases, and work to ensure that state funding is protected from any cuts during the worst of this pandemic-induced recession.



# PRIORITIES



**1** Advocate for COVID-19 relief funding for domestic violence programs and survivors. This will include strategically expanding the Partnership's state and federal funding advocacy to also include advocacy for philanthropic, corporate, and in-kind support to the field.



**2** 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 support the development of new funding specific for communities of color.
- Supporting a national strategy for updating the VOCA statute to ensure continued deposits at a sufficient level to sustain current or increased funding levels.



**3** Seek out opportunities for prevention funding. Prevention funds remain scarce, with no ongoing state general fund support and strict limitations on utilizing federal funds for prevention. While being mindful of the challenging state budget realities, we will continue to pursue opportunities that emerge.



**4** Continue exploring opportunities to expand the type of domestic violence programs eligible for state funding through the Domestic Violence Assistance Program (DVAP). This issue has been an ongoing priority for the Partnership, and development of an updated proposal was paused due to the COVID-19 crisis. We intend to continue this work at an appropriate time, in coordination with the [Cal OES Domestic Violence Advisory Council](#) and our members.



**5** Begin strategic planning for a shift away from reliance on fines and fees assessed to individuals convicted of domestic violence. A sustainable, permanent funding source must be identified prior to any change in funding.

# ONGOING WORK



Advise Cal OES on funding priorities and implementation through Partnership staff participation on the Domestic Violence Advisory Council (DVAC), VAWA Committee, and VOCA Steering Committee.



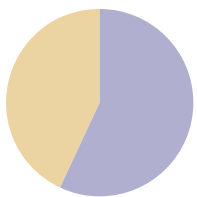
Advocate along with national partners for funding specific to communities of color, culturally specific organizations, and traditionally unserved/underserved communities.



Support increased funding for legal aid services.

# HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

Housing insecurity and domestic violence are fundamentally linked - neither can be solved without addressing the other. 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  
HOMELESSNESS

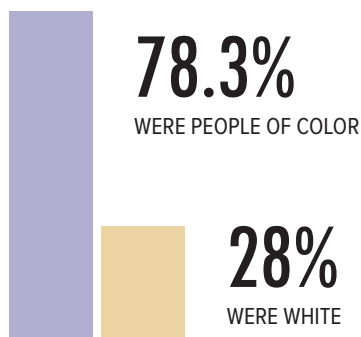
**18,808**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
SURVIVORS AND CHILDREN  
STAYED IN CALIFORNIA'S  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
SHELTERS IN FY18-19



## PEOPLE OF COLOR EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS AT FAR GREATER RATES THAN WHITE PEOPLE

IN RECENT RESEARCH BY THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL  
INNOVATION, APPROXIMATELY



57% of all homeless women that report domestic violence as the immediate cause of their homelessness.<sup>4</sup> 18,808 domestic violence survivors and children stayed in California's domestic violence emergency shelters in FY18-19.<sup>5</sup> 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—three to eight times higher than their proportion of the general population.<sup>6</sup> 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.

As Californians stay home to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we are reminded that “home” is an unsafe place for survivors and their children. As isolation increases, so does the risk of domestic violence. Despite the challenges to provide services, programs remain available 24/7 to assist those in need. As programs shift their practices to keep survivors and staff safe, they need the support of policymakers. While many funding streams include specific requirements, the present situation demands flexibility.

# PRIORITIES

1



## Secure survivor-dedicated funding within state homelessness funding.

- Secure funding for COVID-19 hotel stays for domestic violence survivors. With shelters experiencing reduced capacity as they address the public health crisis, expanding the availability of hotel beds is essential for the safety of survivors. More funding will be necessary to maintain even the present level of service.
- Advocate for the state to require that a percentage of all funds that the state distributes to communities for addressing homelessness is dedicated to addressing the needs of survivors. Far too often domestic violence programs do not receive homelessness funding to support their work.
- In addition to dedicated funding, we will also advocate for improvements to the state homelessness planning and processes to ensure domestic violence is included appropriately.

2



## Shift the narrative to increase understanding by policymakers about the intersection of domestic violence and homelessness and position the Partnership and its members as a key stakeholder in homelessness policy.

3



## Increase eviction protections for survivors.

- With millions of Californians at risk of eviction as a result of COVID-19's impact on our economy, we will work with legislative leaders and allied organizations to ensure the needs of domestic violence survivors are included in the next COVID-19 eviction protection bill. This will include addressing the specific ways that the intersection of abuse and the pandemic is impacting survivors during this moment.
- Expand current protections to prevent eviction when abuse has temporarily impacted a survivor's inability to pay rent.

# ONGOING WORK



Provide technical assistance and support for the Housing Opportunities Mean Everything (HOME) Cohort of six domestic violence programs, funded through the Women's Foundation California to focus on improved system outcomes for survivors experiencing homelessness.



Support funding for eviction defense and homelessness prevention legal services.



Support efforts to increase the availability of long term rental subsidies and affordable housing and elevate the ways a lack of housing harms survivors.



Advocate alongside with national partners to improve Housing and Urban Development (HUD) response to domestic violence.



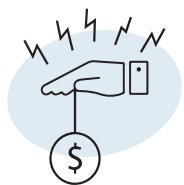
Promote how a range of housing services is successful in preventing or reducing homelessness, including advocacy for [Domestic Violence Housing First](#) programs and funding.



Create spaces for peer to peer learning and information sharing among Members working on these issues.

# ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Survivors and families experiencing domestic violence need the economic security provided by a solid financial foundation including access to benefits and paid leave. The COVID-19 pandemic created or deepened economic hardships for thousands of Californians, including survivors and their families. These economic vulnerabilities put survivors at risk of ending up further in poverty or returning to their abusive partner. Financial abuse occurs in 99% of domestic violence cases<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.



**99%**  
PERCENTAGE OF  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
CASES WHERE FINANCIAL  
ABUSE OCCURS

IN A 2012 SURVEY,  
OF THE

**85%**

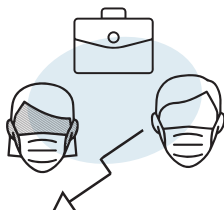
OF VICTIMS WHO RETURNED  
TO THEIR ABUSIVE PARTNERS,  
A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER CITED  
AN INABILITY TO ADDRESS THEIR FINANCES



DURING THE FIRST THREE MONTHS OF THE ECONOMIC  
DOWNTURN, EMPLOYMENT FOR BLACK AND LATINX  
WOMEN FELL BY OVER

**20%**

- MORE THAN THREE  
TIMES THE DECLINE  
IN EMPLOYMENT FOR  
WHITE MEN



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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> Every step we take to improve economic security for survivors will help keep them safe during this already tumultuous time.

Economic justice work includes acknowledging the disparate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. If we are truly committed to ending domestic violence and serving survivors, we must work to create stronger communities for survivors to thrive in. Racial justice is economic justice. According to the

California Budget and Policy Center, during the COVID-19 recession, the majority of jobs lost were in industries with low average weekly earnings. During the first three months of the economic downturn, employment for Black and Latinx women fell by over 20%, more than three times the decline in employment for white men. Immigrant women saw the steepest decline in employment.<sup>11</sup> Immigrant survivors also face specific economic barriers when unable to access work authorization or social safety net programs. Economic justice is prevention. 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.



## PRIORITIES



1 Create remedies for survivors dealing with the impacts of financial abuse, including incurred debt. This will include pursuing legislation requiring debt collectors to cease collection of the debt if it's proven to be a result of financial abuse.



2 Mitigate the impact of poor credit for survivors by reducing systemic barriers to make it easier and faster for survivors to repair or rebuild their credit.



3 Review and comprehensively update the Safe at Home Program to address barriers to survivor participation and increase access.

## ONGOING WORK



Partner with advocacy organizations and government agencies to increase child care access and affordability and reduce barriers for survivors.



Collaborate with anti-poverty programs to address access to public benefits.



Address the needs of women and families in the workplace as an active member in the [Work & Family Coalition](#) and [Stronger California](#).



Participate on the [California Victim Compensation Board \(CalVCB\)](#) Advisory Committee.



# ADDRESSING THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

The Partnership is committed to de-centering criminal legal responses in favor of survivor & community-led solutions to prevent and end domestic violence. This section of our policy agenda will focus on addressing the ways in which our current criminal legal system harms survivors, and the systemic racism embedded in this system that disproportionately harms Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. A 2015 study by the National Domestic Violence Hotline illuminated a number of the challenges survivors experience with law enforcement responses. 1 in 4 survivors surveyed reported that they would not call the police in future, and more than half said calling the police would make things worse. Two-thirds or more said they were afraid the police would not believe them or do nothing, and 75% of women who called the police reported that law enforcement involvement had either no impact on their safety or made them less safe.<sup>12</sup> Responses to the Partnership's 2020 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.

**1 in 4**

SURVIVORS SURVEYED  
REPORTED THAT THEY WOULD  
NOT CALL THE POLICE IN  
FUTURE



**2/3**

OR MORE SAID THEY WERE AFRAID  
THE POLICE WOULD NOT BELIEVE  
THEM OR DO NOTHING



**75%**

OF WOMEN WHO CALLED THE  
POLICE REPORTED THAT LAW  
ENFORCEMENT INVOLVEMENT HAD  
EITHER NO IMPACT ON THEIR SAFETY OR  
MADE THEM LESS SAFE



While the domestic violence movement for many years has focused on investing in the criminal system, we have intentionally shifted to prioritize alternatives and solutions to promote survivor safety and accountability by those who commit harm without relying on a carceral response. In moving this work forward we will continue to collaborate with and learn from BIPOC leaders and racial justice advocacy organizations. Recently, the Partnership joined with 45 other state domestic and sexual violence coalitions in June 2020 to reaffirm our

commitment to this work. This [Moment of Truth letter](#) outlines key values and a core set of priorities to inform our collective work across multiple states. Our Members have highlighted their interest in alternatives to the criminal system and learning more about how to implement these responses in appropriate ways. We will lean in to this learning edge for the Partnership and the domestic violence field.

## PRIORITIES

1



**Support the advancement of alternative responses to the current 9-1-1 / law enforcement response.**

- Provide ongoing training and technical assistance to the field, and develop policy guidance to support communities considering and implementing alternatives while also addressing the safety needs of survivors and those responding to emergency calls.
- Support funding for pilot projects and related legislation, including a re-introduction of the 2020 C.R.I.S.E.S. Act ([AB 2054, Asm. Kamlager](#)).

2



**Support the development of alternative responses to accountability through restorative and transformative justice approaches.**

- Provide training and technical assistance to the field to support their learning and future implementation.
- Advocate for funding to support accountability and healing alternatives.

3



**Re-examine the array of grant requirements for MOUs between domestic violence programs and criminal legal system entities, and advance both administrative and legislative change to remove these mandates where appropriate.**

4



**Support changes to eliminate requirements for survivors to engage with the criminal system to access needed safety and benefits, including access to Victim Compensation and interactions with the Child Welfare System.**

## ONGOING WORK



**Advocate for a Violence Against Women Act reauthorization with improved language to support alternative justice responses and additional amendments to reduce criminal legal system requirements for survivors and victim service providers.**



**Support the move away from cash bail, and advocate for effective implementation of alternate pretrial detention and release processes to support survivor safety.**



**Monitor the ongoing Batterer Intervention Program pilot projects established by [AB 372 \(2017, Asm. Stone\)](#) and provide technical assistance as needed.**



**Oppose increased criminalization efforts.**

# PREVENTION

With ending domestic violence in California as a central goal, prevention is of utmost importance and in the intersection of all we do. We will continue our work to ensure that domestic violence prevention has support, visibility and momentum, including within intersecting social justice movements. Throughout our policy agenda and ongoing work, we recognize that by addressing these key issues for survivors, economic justice, housing and homelessness, and addressing the criminal legal system and immigration we are working to prevent domestic violence.



In FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20, the Partnership and the [California Coalition Against Sexual Assault \(CALCASA\)](#) worked closely together to successfully secure prevention funding in the state budget, with \$10 million and \$5 million in the respective fiscal years. These funds did not continue in the COVID-impacted FY 2020-21 budget and we expect that California's recessing and challenging budget years will continue through this legislative session, making new prevention funding unlikely. Our organizations remain committed to elevating the importance of ongoing prevention funding and seeking out funding opportunities.

## ONGOING WORK



Elevate the issue of prevention and the need for legislative support and dedicated funding, through events including annual Orange Day briefings.



Seek out funding opportunities to support prevention efforts.



# IMMIGRATION

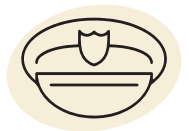
**Too many immigrant survivors face hurdles to safety, including fear and uncertainty as a result of changing federal policy and increased immigration enforcement. Our work includes advocating for policies that support survivors' safety and actively opposing additional barriers for immigrant survivors.**

We work closely with our federal partners including [Protecting Immigrant Families](#), [Alliance for Immigrant Survivors](#), [Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence](#), and [Tahirih Justice Center](#) to respond to threats to immigrant safety and stability. Immigrant women often feel trapped in abusive relationships because of immigration laws, language barriers, social isolation, and lack of financial resources. People who harm often use their partners' immigration status as a tool of control.<sup>13</sup> In a 2017 survey of victim advocates and attorneys, 78% of advocates reported that immigrant survivors expressed concerns about contacting the police, 75% of service providers reported that immigrant survivors have concerns about going to court for a matter related to the person causing them harm, and 43% of advocates worked with immigrant survivors who dropped civil or criminal cases because of fear.<sup>14</sup>

The primary focus of our advocacy is at the federal level, through both administrative and legislative advocacy. We will also support state-level efforts when appropriate, including expanding access to health care and other benefits or services for immigrant survivors.

**78%**

OF ADVOCATES REPORTED THAT IMMIGRANT SURVIVORS EXPRESSED CONCERNS ABOUT CONTACTING THE POLICE



**75%**

OF SERVICE PROVIDERS REPORTED THAT IMMIGRANT SURVIVORS HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT GOING TO COURT FOR A MATTER RELATED TO THE ABUSER/OFFENDER



**43%**

OF ADVOCATES WORKED WITH IMMIGRANT SURVIVORS WHO DROPPED CIVIL OR CRIMINAL CASES BECAUSE OF FEAR



## ONGOING WORK



Advocate for policies that support immigrant survivors' access to the range of benefits and resources they need. This includes ongoing advocacy to increase the number of U visas available and to reduce wait times in U visa case processing.



Actively oppose policy which creates additional barriers for immigrant survivors securing legal status or protections.



Support policy change to develop options for immigrant survivors to access relief and protection without requiring engagement with the criminal legal system, and to de-link immigration and law enforcement collaborations.

# SOURCES

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- <sup>14</sup> 2017 Advocate and Legal Service Survey Regarding Immigrant Survivors, <http://www.tahirih.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017-Advocate-and-Legal-Service-Survey-Key-Findings.pdf>



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