



Clinical Technical Assistance: Domestic Violence Awareness

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) – a time to raise awareness through community events, online resources, education, and shared experiences. Domestic Violence is also referred to as Interpersonal Violence and Intimate Partner violence (IPV).

History:

National Domestic Violence Awareness Month first began in 1981 by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence as a Day of Unity to connect advocates for survivors of domestic violence (originally termed “battered women”) across the country. This Day of Unity soon evolved into a week and in October 1987, the first National Domestic Violence Awareness Month was observed.

Prevalence:

- Approximately 10 million individuals every year are affected by family and domestic violence in the U.S.
- In the U.S., as many as 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men are victims of domestic violence annually.
- Domestic violence is responsible for more than 1,500 deaths annually in the U.S.
- Financial hardship and unemployment are contributors to domestic violence - an economic downturn is associated with increased calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline.
- Domestic and family violence includes a range of abuse including physical, emotional, sexual, economic, and psychological toward children, adults, and the elderly.
- Domestic and family violence occurs in all races, ages, and sexes; there is no cultural, socioeconomic, education, religious, or geographic limitation.

Mental Health and Substance Use:

- A 2016 study regarding domestic violence and mental health states that “clinicians need to be aware that patients who are presenting with mental health conditions or symptoms of depression or anxiety may be experiencing or have experienced domestic violence and abuse. The high psychological morbidity in this population means that trauma-informed psychological support is needed for survivors who seek support from domestic violence and abuse.”¹
- Studies by the Centers of Disease Control highlight the connection between substance use and domestic violence:
 - » Between 25 and 50 percent of men who commit domestic violence also have problems with substance use.
 - » More than 30 percent of men consumed alcohol at the time they committed a domestic assault, and 90 percent used substances on the same day, with alcohol and cocaine most commonly used.
 - » Around 75 percent of individuals who use substances and are in relationships in which interpersonal violence occurs have a partner who also uses substances.



Clinical Considerations

- **Utilize DV/IPV screening questions during the intake process.** It is important that all clients, regardless of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or age be screened for potential domestic violence. The CDC has a comprehensive list of potential screening tools.
- **Provide a safe space for client disclosure.** Discussing past or ongoing DV/IPV is extremely difficult and places the client in a vulnerable situation. Be especially mindful of your non-verbal communication (facial expressions, body language, etc.). Although this is true for all clients who experience DV/IPV, male clients may experience greater difficulty disclosing their experience with DV/IPV due to social stereotypes.
- **Be prepared to offer DV/IPV resources.** Do you know what DV/IPV resources are available in your area? If your client stated it was unsafe for them to return home, would you know what the next step would be? Familiarize yourself with community resources so that you can quickly assist a client should the need arise.
- **Safety first!** If a client is experiencing DV/IPV, the focus of services may need to switch to safety and housing rather than recovery. Services can always return to a focus on substance use recovery once the client is again safe.

Ways to Observe and Learn More about DVAM:

- View and share the #1ListeningFromHome public service announcement and you can help someone who is experiencing domestic violence during COVID-19 (<https://nomore.org/campaigns/dvam/>).
- The Domestic Violence Awareness Project developed a unified message around #1Thing. “One person’s actions may seem insignificant, but together a communities’ collective #1Thing can lead to real social transformation” (<https://www.dvawareness.org/1thing>).
- The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence announces its next national conference on domestic violence. A fully virtual event broadcast from St. Louis, Missouri from October 25 – 28, 2020. For information and registration: <https://ncadv.org/conference>.

Additional Resources:

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline** - 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE), 1-800-787-3224 (TTY for the Deaf)
- **Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence** - Among the services provided to domestic violence victims are crisis intervention; counseling; accompaniment to police, medical, and court facilities; and temporary emergency shelter for victims and their dependent children. Prevention and educational programs are provided to lessen the risk of domestic violence in the community at large.
 - » 1-800-932-4632 (in Pennsylvania)
 - » 1-800-537-2238 (national)
- **SAMHSA Substance Abuse Treatment and Domestic Violence** – Quick Guide for Clinicians based on Tip 25 https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Substance-Abuse-Treatment-and-Domestic-Violence/sma15-3583?referer=from_search_result

Sources:

1. Ferrari, G. et al., Domestic violence and mental health: a cross-sectional survey of women seeking help from domestic violence support services, 2016.
2. (Image) The Safe Center LI. Domestic Violence Awareness Month. <http://thesafecenterli.org/domestic-violence-awareness-month/>

