

BARRIERS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS FROM MULTICULTURAL AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES*

ECONOMIC

Many abusers keep the survivors financially dependent on them, particularly if the survivors have no legal papers to work. Economic issues complicate access to phones and internet which help survivors find out about and schedule DV services. Economic problems also limit access to obtaining legal help and cause difficulties securing transportation to receive services.

LANGUAGE

Many immigrants lack the ability to communicate with the police, DV service providers, or the courts in English. Many legal documents or DV brochures are only available in English.

LEGAL STATUS

Many immigrants resist seeking help for fear of being deported. Also, many immigrants have left their home countries for fear of police and governmental agencies there. Batterers use this fear to control immigrant survivors.

SEXUALITY

The LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community is often overlooked when considering DV. Survivors in same-sex unions run the risk of being mistaken for the batterer.

LACK OF SHELTERS/SERVICES

There is a scarcity of shelters and resources for survivors of DV who:

ARE MEN (GAY OR STRAIGHT) - Only a handful of DV shelters accept adult males. Many also limit the age of male children in the shelter to under 15 years old.

HAVE DRUG/ALCOHOL ADDICTIONS - Most DV shelters do not accept survivors who have drug or alcohol addictions even though this may have been a coping method to survive the abuse.

HAVE A DISABILITY - Many DV Shelters cannot accommodate survivors with severe mental illness or those with physical disabilities.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Many cultures, particularly among Asian communities, associate serious stigma and shame with leaving a marriage or admitting DV issues.

A lot of DV shelters do not offer culturally sensitive services to survivors either through lack of training or funds. For example, aside from offering services in different languages, the ability to offer just culturally/religiously appropriate food can affect how long a survivor will stay in the shelter.

ISOLATION

Survivors, especially recent immigrants, are often isolated from the support network of family or friends who are in home countries. It's easy for the batterer to keep the survivor isolated by not allowing her/him to work, learn English, or make new friends.



* Prepared by the Los Angeles Domestic Violence Task Force's Multicultural and Underserved Communities Committee