

# Safety Planning & Considerations with Violence & Victimization

*Best Practices for Addressing The Needs of Domestic/Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking-Affected Populations*

**Dalia Silverstein (they/them)**  
Community Outreach & Education



# Discussion Outline

1. Interpersonal Violence & Effects
  2. Intersection of Violence & Housing
  3. Trauma-Informed Care
  4. Safety Planning Overview & Best Practices
  5. Special Considerations & Examples
  6. Summary & Additional Resources
-

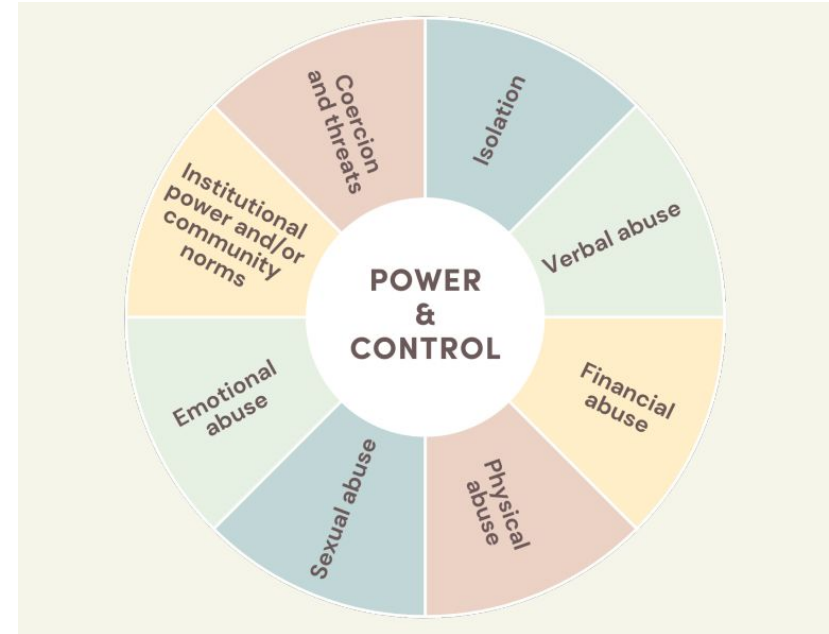
# Intro To Interpersonal Violence

Where does violence-- such as DV, SA, dating violence, stalking-- come from?

- Social/cultural norms domination, entitlement, normalization of violence (1)
- Continuing cycles of violence (2)
- Individual feelings, usually nurtured by environment (3)

What are the intentions of this violence?

- Gaining, maintaining, and exerting power and control



*\*non-exhaustive list*



\*Effects are both physical & emotional/psychological, even when it may seem like just one or the other on the surface

# Intersections of Housing Insecurity & Violence

**People experiencing homelessness/housing insecurity are more likely to experience violence.**

- 1/3 of ciswomen, 1/4 of cis-men, ~40% of trans homeless folks experienced PA/SA in past year (2003)
- 40% of homeless individuals report being victims of violence, including PV, SA, & harassment (2018)
- NY: 70% of homeless individuals are Black, 34% Latinx (2018).
- 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ vs. 4.5% gen. pop. (2017). 44% Native youth, 38% trans youth (2022)

**WHY?**



- Risks associated with engagement in survival behaviors (1)
- Societal views about homelessness motivate violence (2)
- Increased vulnerability preyed upon, power dynamics (3)
- Consequences of structural racism, transphobia, ableism (4)

**People who have experienced violence are more likely to experience homelessness/housing insecurity**

- 80% of mothers with children experiencing homelessness previously experienced DV (2009)
- 78.3% of homeless women had been subjected to rape, physical assault, an/or stalking in lifetime (2005)
- 46% of unsheltered homeless adults (80% of women) cite trauma/abuse as factors in their housing loss (2019)
- In NYC, 36% of youth cite physical, sexual, or mental abuse as cause of homelessness (2013)

**WHY?**



- Financial abuse/control (1)
- Lack of safe, accessible, supportive shelter/temp. housing (2)
- Lack of affordable housing options (3)
- Cascade effects of trauma/abuse (4)

# Trauma-Informed Support for Violence & Victimization

There are many ways to support a person who is or has experienced interpersonal violence. Many of these fall outside of, but go further than, traditionally assumed ways.

- ♡ Nurture connection
- ♡ Ask questions with the intent of learning/curiosity, not judging
- ♡ Practice compassionate listening and communication
- ♡ Prioritize survivor self-determination
- ♡ Offer tangible forms of support

\*\*\*Remember, abuse is NEVER the fault of the person harmed. **Abuse is unjustifiable.**

# What is Safety Planning?

## What is safety?

- Freedom from violence and injury, and the freedom to make decisions about one's life and body without fear of harm
- May look/feel different depending on the individual/context (1)

Safety planning = identifying risks, mapping resources, and assessing options, for *expected & unexpected events* to **help a person stay as safe as possible in whatever they are doing.**

**Aims:** Principles of autonomy, respect, trust, nonjudgement, and harm reduction to reduce harm & maximize safety by...

- ★ Strengthening relationships, moving away from isolation
- ★ Gathering resources-- plan ahead, thinking through consequences/outcomes
- ★ Strategizing options to increase a survivor's ability to gain power back over their own life and decision-making-- shifting conditions for what's possible/what a person can do

# Trauma-informed Safety Planning: Special Considerations

MAINSTREAM VIOLENCE MOVEMENTS		TRAUMA-INFORMED SAFETY PLANNING	
✘	Assuming a one-size-fits all approach based on the “perfect victim” (1)	✓	Understanding different things work for different people based on their situations
✘	Related “saviorism”-- thinking one knows better than the survivor (2)	✓	Trusting that the survivor knows themselves and their situation best, following their lead
✘	Related failure to acknowledge risk of survivor criminalization/criminal legal system abuse (3)	✓	Acknowledging and accounting for potential risks based on societal/systemic failures
✘	Ignoring continued violence that often happens at the hands of government, social service, healthcare agencies	✓	Realizing experiences, Vetting additional support services, not blaming survivors for hesitancy trying or using services
✘	Narrow-minded idea of justice; what it should be, what survivor wants/should want it to be (4)	✓	Validating different concepts of justice that may not or cannot align with “punishment”



# Example Components of Safety Plan

## SITUATIONAL SAFETY PLANNING

Assessing risks/safety in potential situations:

What is the potential future risk/harm?

Who/what is the cause?  
The target?

What is a possible safety action? Who will do/support this action?

## OPTIONS FOR INTERVENTION/ ESCAPE

Where are safer places you can go? How will you get there?

Who can help you get there/ how will you let them know?

## OPTIONS FOR HEALING/SUPPORT

What are you already doing to feel supported?

Who can help remind you to do these things? What kinds of resources do you need to feel supported?

## FOLLOW UP/NEXT STEPS

When will I re-visit this safety plan?

Who can I share this plan with? By when?

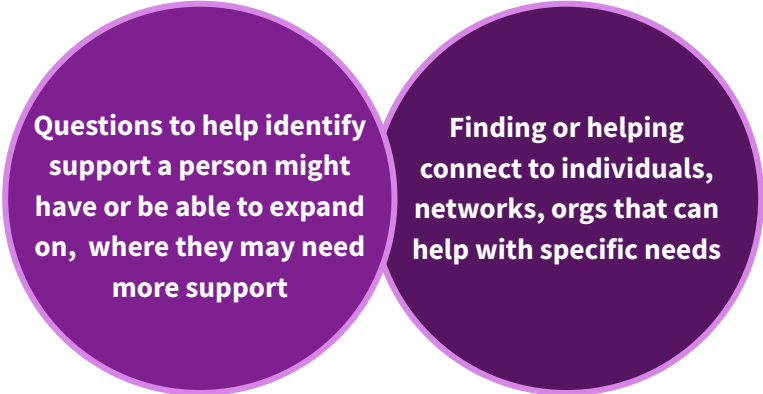
# Identifying Support

Opening up to more people is often terrifying, especially with trauma, abuse, and associated isolation, stigma, fear, and distrust.

But, growing wider support networks can be incredibly helpful for increasing safety. Helping people build networks, **while understanding why they may not have them in place** can transform mental & physical safety. (1)

## Mapping allies & barriers:

Contrasting isolation of abuse with other options can increase survivor senses of agency/hope and an exercise in self-determination to learn and make informed decisions of one's own volition.



Questions to help identify support a person might have or be able to expand on, where they may need more support

Finding or helping connect to individuals, networks, orgs that can help with specific needs

# Practical Considerations for Safety Planning

Some practical considerations may include (non-exhaustive list)

- **Documentation:** experiences, timeline, “evidence”
- **Finances:** access to own funds, safekeeping
- **Emergencies:** where to go, what must be handled, who can support them
- **Children:** care, safety, communication
- **Pets:** temporary/long term/permanent care
- **Language and Interpretation, accessibility needs:** resources for access/support
- **Legal issues:** where can legal support come from if the need arises?
- **Important documents:** access, storage, safety
- **Healthcare:** accessible options for care/medical needs

# Safety Planning and Criminalization

POTENTIAL CRIM. SITES	EXAMPLE SAFETY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS
Calling police	Understanding unpredictability of/lack of control in police interactions • Possibility of arrest/being seen as aggressor • Person to call for support? • Previous criminalization? • If so, what may interaction affect/trigger? • Who can be called for help if detained? • Preparation for arrest/release of other person
Children	Fleeing with child? → “good cause” report, or else risk kidnapping charges • “Failure to protect” laws can lead to harsh sentencing of mothers/loss of custody without documentation/extensive events • CPS involvement, may take children away • If so, can a family member file to be caregiver? • Consequent entanglement with juvenile/adult criminal court, schools, hospitals, immigration systems, family court, etc.
Restraining Orders	Limits of restraining orders, strings attached • Filer can violate own order • May be unaware of and violate emergency order • Orders are retroactive, not preventative • Not everyone is deterred by orders; outcome depends on survivor’s willingness to call police + unpredictable police response • Plan for when person is served, awareness of legal consequences of contact • Orders can facilitate criminalization for survivors
Prosecution	Lack of control over process, potential trauma of process regardless of consent to participate • Can be jailed/charged for refusing to cooperate • Prosecution ≠ safety • Potential retaliation, etc • May also be criminalized for self defense/other acts of survival

# Summary: What Can You Do?

Understand the intersections

Be knowledgeable about the connections between housing insecurity and violence-- what makes certain populations more at risk of homelessness from violence, violence from homelessness, and both

Take a trauma-informed approach to care & support

Use your understanding of the intersections of housing insecurity and violence to inform your understanding and support of survivor's situations, decisions, mindset, behavior, and needs.

Ensure low-barrier services

Recognize the unique barriers faced by survivors of violence in finding safe, stable, and affordable housing, and the importance of this housing to their safety. Work to eliminate these barriers

Take a survivor-centered approach to safety planning

Focus on autonomy, trust, respect, non-judgment, harm reduction, unconditional support, survivor knowledge.

Collaborate & connect

Work to ensure survivors have access to and knowledge of full-spectrum care for all of their needs-- **housing insecurity is never the only issue.**

# Resources/References

Most information is adapted from Community Justice Exchange’s “Safety Planning and Intimate Partner Violence: A Toolkit for Survivors and Supporters,”: Hyejin Shin

([https://survivedandpunished.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SafetyToolkit\\_5.2.22.pdf](https://survivedandpunished.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SafetyToolkit_5.2.22.pdf))

Additional resources:

- Creative Interventions Toolkit “Mapping Allies and Barriers: Who Can Help?”
- <https://vawnet.org/material/it-takes-village-people-advocacy-friends-and-family-lgbt-survivors-abuse>
- <https://safehousingpartnerships.org>

References:

- The Experience of Violence in the Lives of Homeless Women: A Research Report (2005)
- Homeless Children and Youth: Causes and Consequences (2009)
- <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/216287>
- [https://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/hate-crimes-2018-2019\\_web.pdf](https://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/hate-crimes-2018-2019_web.pdf)
- <https://www.capolicylab.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Health-Conditions-Among-Unsheltered-Adults-in-the-U.S..pdf>
- <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Ny-fact-sheet-2019.pdf>
- <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/national-estimates-of-youth-homelessness/>
- <https://www.safehorizon.org/get-informed/homeless-youth-statistics-facts/#statistics-and-facts/>
- <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/homelessness-and-housing-instability-among-lgbtq-youth-feb-2022/>



Questions? Comments? Concerns?

*For more information:*  
[dsilverstein@eclivibes.org](mailto:dsilverstein@eclivibes.org)

ECLI-VIBES  
631-360-3606  
185 Oval Dr., Islandia NY 11749