

## KEY SURVEY FINDINGS: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS AND SURVIVORS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

From June to September 2019, The National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health (NCDVTMH) administered a nationwide needs assessment to domestic violence (DV) programs within states, territories, and Tribal nations. The survey focused on DV programs' capacity to meet the needs of survivors and their children experiencing challenges related to substance use or mental health. A total of 579 DV program staff members participated in this survey.

### **Changes in Adult Survivors' Mental Health-Related Needs from 2017 to 2019**

- 90% reported an increased demand for trauma-focused mental health services, like counseling or therapy.
- 73% reported an increased demand for mental health and psychiatric services for survivors experiencing more disabling mental health challenges.
- 61% reported changes in the kinds of mental health challenges among survivors accessing their programs.

Respondents shared that survivors' mental health challenges are often made worse by systemic marginalization, lack of affordable housing, economic need, and limited services in the community.

### **Program Preparedness to Meet Survivors' Mental Health-Related Needs**

- 12% of respondents said their program is "very prepared" to meet the needs of adult survivors with more severe or disabling mental health challenges.
- 10% of respondents said their program is "very prepared" to meet the needs of survivors who are parenting and who have severe or disabling mental health challenges.
- 47% said their program is "very prepared" to meet the needs of adult survivors with mental health challenges that cause few problems.
- 70% of respondents said their program has a written protocol for how to respond when a survivor has a mental health crisis.

### **Top Three Resources Wanted to Better Meet Survivors' Mental Health-Related Needs**

- 80% wanted expedited referrals for local mental health and psychiatric services.
- 65% wanted more training and consultation for staff members on supporting survivors experiencing mental health challenges.
- 52% wanted more funding for additional on-site mental health/clinical services.

### Key Takeaways:

- DV programs have faced dramatically increased needs for mental health services for adult survivors over a short period of time. This includes culturally specific and linguistically appropriate services.
- Survivors are coming to DV programs with more complex needs. This is happening within a larger context of budget cuts to community mental health and social service programs.
- Many described successes in partnering with mental health programs in their communities, increasing clinical staffing, and offering trauma-informed services and holistic approaches.

You can find the full report at [www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org](http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org).

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