

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMMUNITY WATCH CHECKLIST

At YWCA, we know that not all violence is acknowledged or responded to equally and that some victims go unrecognized altogether. Victims of violence face many barriers to accessing resources and safety. Women of color and other marginalized populations experience disproportionate rates of violence, and face increased barriers in seeking help. We also know that policy change at the systemic level provides a critical leverage point for generating greater safety and security for survivors of domestic violence.

This **Domestic Violence Community Watch Checklist** translates research and best practices for survivor safety and security into a tool for everyday citizens and community organizations who want to take action to ensure that survivors in their community are fully protected and supported.

This tool can help you identify policies, patterns, and practices in your community (city, county, or state) that may be undermining the safety and security of survivors of domestic violence.

By seeking and documenting answers to these questions, you can raise awareness about the issues in your community, organize your community to change public policy, make recommendations to local decision-makers, and ultimately transform your community.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMMUNITY WATCH CHECKLIST

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- ✓ What percent of women in your state have experienced domestic violence, which can include physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner?
- ✓ Are rates of violence increasing or decreasing?

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE PROVIDERS

- ✓ Is there a domestic violence service provider in your city, town, or county?
- ✓ What services do they offer?
 - Emergency shelter
 - Transitional or other housing
 - Transportation to and from the shelter or other wraparound services
 - Court accompaniment, legal advocacy, legal representation by an attorney, or other court-related services
 - Therapy, counseling, or other mental health services for survivors (by a licensed practitioner)
 - Onsite medical services
 - Substance use / abuse treatment
 - Child care, daycare, child therapy, safe exchange / visitation, or other services for children
 - Gender-based violence prevention or education programs
 - Job training or employment assistance programs
 - Financial literacy / budgeting program
 - Homicide reduction initiatives such as lethality assessment screening
- ✓ Does the service provider provide support / advocacy for the following communities?
 - LGBTQ+ survivors
 - Disabled survivors
 - Victims of trafficking
 - Immigrant survivors

- ✓ Does the service provider offer support / advocacy related to:
 - Housing / landlords
 - Health care / health care systems
 - Technology abuse
 - Child welfare / protective services
- ✓ Is the service provider:
 - Accessible by public transportation
 - Accessible for those with mobility disabilities? With vision disabilities? With hearing disabilities?
 - Trans-inclusive?
- ✓ Does the service provider offer multilingual assistance?
- ✓ Does the service provider offer space for survivors with pets?
- ✓ If there is housing for domestic violence survivors, is there sufficient bed space?

LEGAL PROTECTION FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

- ✓ Are there laws or policies in your state or local jurisdiction to prevent housing discrimination against domestic violence survivors? Do these cover:
 - Early lease termination, to permit survivors to break a lease to move to a safe location
 - Lease bifurcation, to permit survivors to remove themselves or an abusive partner from a lease
 - Protection for calling the police, to prevent eviction or other adverse actions based on requesting help from law enforcement
 - Lock changes, to help keep survivors safe once an abuser has left the premises
 - Protection from discriminatory denials and eviction
- ✓ Are there laws or policies in your state or local jurisdiction to prevent employment discrimination against survivors of domestic violence? Do these prohibit employers from:
 - Refusing to hire a qualified individual because he or she is an actual or perceived victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMMUNITY WATCH CHECKLIST

LEGAL PROTECTION FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS (CONT'D)

- Discharging, threatening to discharge, demoting, suspending, or in any way discriminating or retaliating against an individual because he or she is an actual or perceived victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking
 - Refusing to make a reasonable safety accommodation requested by a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, unless such an accommodation would pose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business (e.g. transfer or reassignment; modified job schedule; change in work telephone number, email address, or workstation; installed locks; implementing safety procedures; or other necessary changes)
- ✓ Does your state/locality guarantee SAFE leave to survivors of violence to ensure their employment is protected when they need to access medical attention, make court appearances, seek legal assistance, or get help with safety planning for themselves or immediate family members as a result of their abuse?
- ✓ Does your state offer a confidential address program to survivors?
- ✓ Does your state or local jurisdiction enforce firearm search and seizure in cases of domestic violence, whereby firearms are seized from a spouse or intimate partner accused of domestic violence if a court issues an order of protection / restraining order?
- Does your state or local jurisdiction have sufficient storage space to hold firearms once they are seized?

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- ✓ Are victim/witness advocates available to survivors to provide support during law enforcement interactions?
- ✓ Do police and prosecutors receive regular training on:
- The dynamics and impact of domestic violence
 - The various tactics abusers use, including financial, emotional, and technological abuse
 - Lethality assessment screening tools
 - Victim safety
 - Federal domestic violence laws
 - Legal processes / protocols for seizure of firearms in domestic violence cases
 - Warning signs of domestic violence by officers
 - Local departmental domestic violence response protocols
- ✓ Does your police force have a dedicated team for domestic violence cases?
- ✓ Do officers in your state or local jurisdiction follow mandatory arrest policies when responding to calls about domestic violence?
- ✓ Do prosecutors in your state or local jurisdiction jail survivors to coerce testimony against their abusers?
- ✓ Does your state or local jurisdiction have policies in place to address incidents of domestic violence committed by law enforcement officers against their intimate partners, and for implementing prevention strategies?
- ✓ Does your state or local jurisdiction have policies and procedures in place to screen and investigate law enforcement candidates for past domestic violence incidents or allegations?

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMMUNITY WATCH CHECKLIST

JUDICIAL SYSTEMS

- ✓ Are victim/witness advocates available to survivors to provide support during judicial interactions?
- ✓ Do judges and court personnel receive regular training on:
 - The dynamics and impact of domestic violence
 - The various tactics abusers use, including financial, emotional, and technological abuse
 - Lethality assessment screening tools
 - Victim safety
 - Federal domestic violence laws
 - Legal processes/protocols for seizure of firearms in domestic violence cases
 - Warning signs of domestic violence by officers
 - Local departmental domestic violence response protocols
- ✓ Does your state or local jurisdiction have a dedicated domestic violence court?
- ✓ Do judges award financial support in civil protection order cases in your state or local jurisdiction, which can provide crucial support for survivor attempting to leave abusive situations?
- ✓ Does your state or local jurisdiction have policies in place to address incidents of domestic violence committed by judges and court personnel against their intimate partners, and for implementing prevention strategies?
- ✓ Does your state or local jurisdiction have policies and procedures in place to screen and investigate judicial candidates for past domestic violence incidents or allegations?

IMMIGRANT SURVIVORS

- ✓ Are multilingual interpreters available in police stations, on 911 calls, in courtrooms, etc.?
- ✓ Are there laws in place to prevent immigrant victims from being detained by law enforcement or immigration officials when reporting or seeking safety or assistance after abuse?
- ✓ Does your state or local jurisdiction permit immigrant survivors to access:
 - Health benefits
 - Food assistance
 - Cash assistance benefits
 - Housing assistance
- ✓ Is your local jurisdiction a sanctuary jurisdiction?