



Child Protection in Families Experiencing Domestic Violence

Doreen Nicholas
(she/her/hers)
doreen@acesdv.org

The Role of a State Coalition

Each state and territory has a coalition for domestic and sexual violence that is a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization

ACESDV advocates for comprehensive responses for domestic and sexual survivors at the local, state, and national levels

The coalition serves as the primary provider of training and technical assistance for domestic and sexual violence programs in Arizona on best practices in programming and administration and advocates on behalf of programs and survivors in public policy advocacy efforts

Our mission is to **dismantle oppression** and **promote equity**

Training Agreements

Silence your cell phones

Be respectful

Be open and present

Participate!

Training Objectives

See how child abuse and domestic violence can overlap
Understand the impact domestic violence has on both adult
and child victims

Describe various supportive interventions that can be used by
case workers to assist clients dealing with domestic violence

Obtain local and statewide resources

Learning Goal

To increase **safety** and **support** for children in families where domestic violence is occurring

Overlap between Child Maltreatment & Domestic Violence

Co-occurrence of Child Maltreatment and Domestic Violence

Children are more likely to be maltreated when there is DV in the home

57% of youth who witness domestic violence are also maltreated

Approximately 15.5 million American children are estimated to live in families in which partner violence occurs

Children who witness domestic violence experience higher rates of posttraumatic stress

¹Dong et al. (2004). ²Hamby, S., Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., & Ormrod, R. (2010). ³McDonald et al. (2006).

⁴National Child Trauma Stress Network.



Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence

Children can be exposed to DV in multiple ways, such as:

Hearing a violent event

Being directly involved as an **eyewitness, intervening, or being used** as a part of a violent event (e.g., being used as a shield against abusive actions)

Experiencing the aftermath of a violent event

Being used as a **source of information**

Being used as a **pawn** by the abuser to coerce the victim into doing something

Common Ground

Child welfare workers and victim services providers:

Both want to end domestic violence and child maltreatment

Both want children to be safe

Both want adult victims to be protected—for their own safety and so their children are not harmed by the violence

Both want to support a parent's strengths

Both prefer that children not be involved in DCS, if avoidable

Different Responses to Families Experiencing Domestic Violence

It is an unrealistic expectation that DCS **investigate every report** of children living in a home where domestic violence occurs

However, DCS should **screen every report for domestic violence** and refer to specific criteria or agency protocol when determining if the referral warrants further investigation

Some families may benefit from DCS services; others may benefit from community-based services

There are families experiencing domestic violence where DCS involvement is necessary and DCS **should always intervene when a child's exposure to DV meets the legal definition of child abuse/neglect**



The Basics of Domestic Violence



Domestic Violence

Animal Abuse

Family Violence

Child Abuse

Teen Dating Violence

Elder Abuse

Stalking

Intimate Partner
Violence

Intimate Partner
Sexual Violence

Domestic Violence

do·mes·tic vi·o·lence

noun

A pattern of abusive or coercive behaviors in any intimate or familial relationship that are used to gain and maintain power and control over another person.



Legal Definition (ARS § 13-3601)

Passed in 1980

Tag Crime

Relationship Test

- Current or former spouses
- Child(ren) in common
- Pregnant by the other
- Related by blood or marriage
- Current or former cohabitants
- Current or former dating/sexual partners

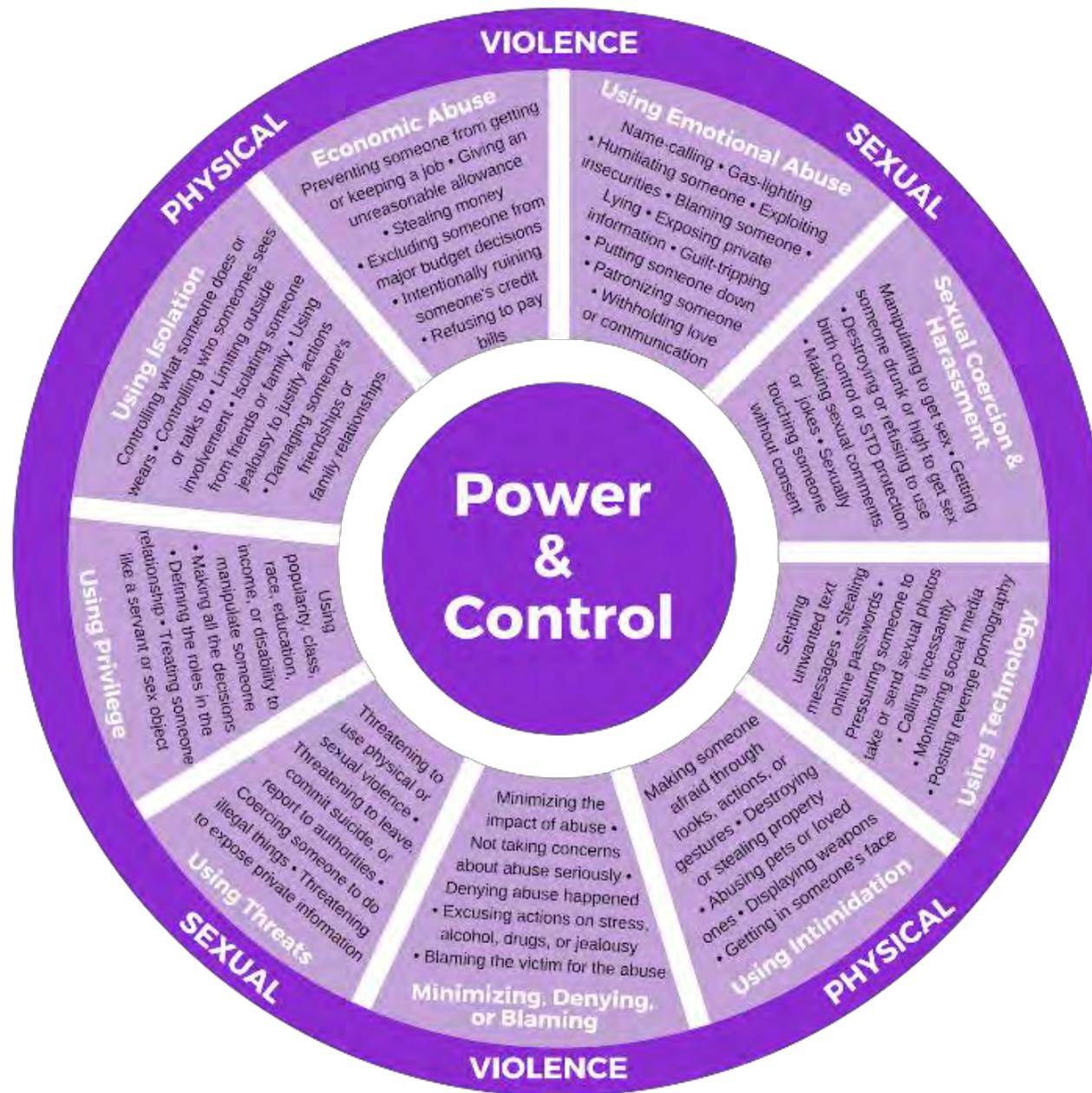
Crime + Relationship = Domestic Violence



Group Activity

What does abuse look or sound like?

Power & Control



More than just physical violence...



Animal Abuse



Unlawful Imprisonment



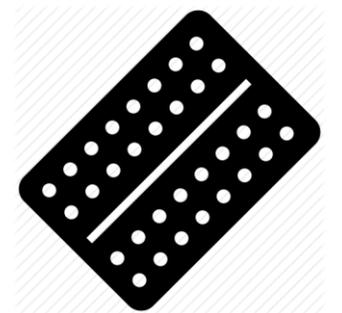
Kidnapping



Exploitation



Marital Rape



Sexual and Reproductive Coercion

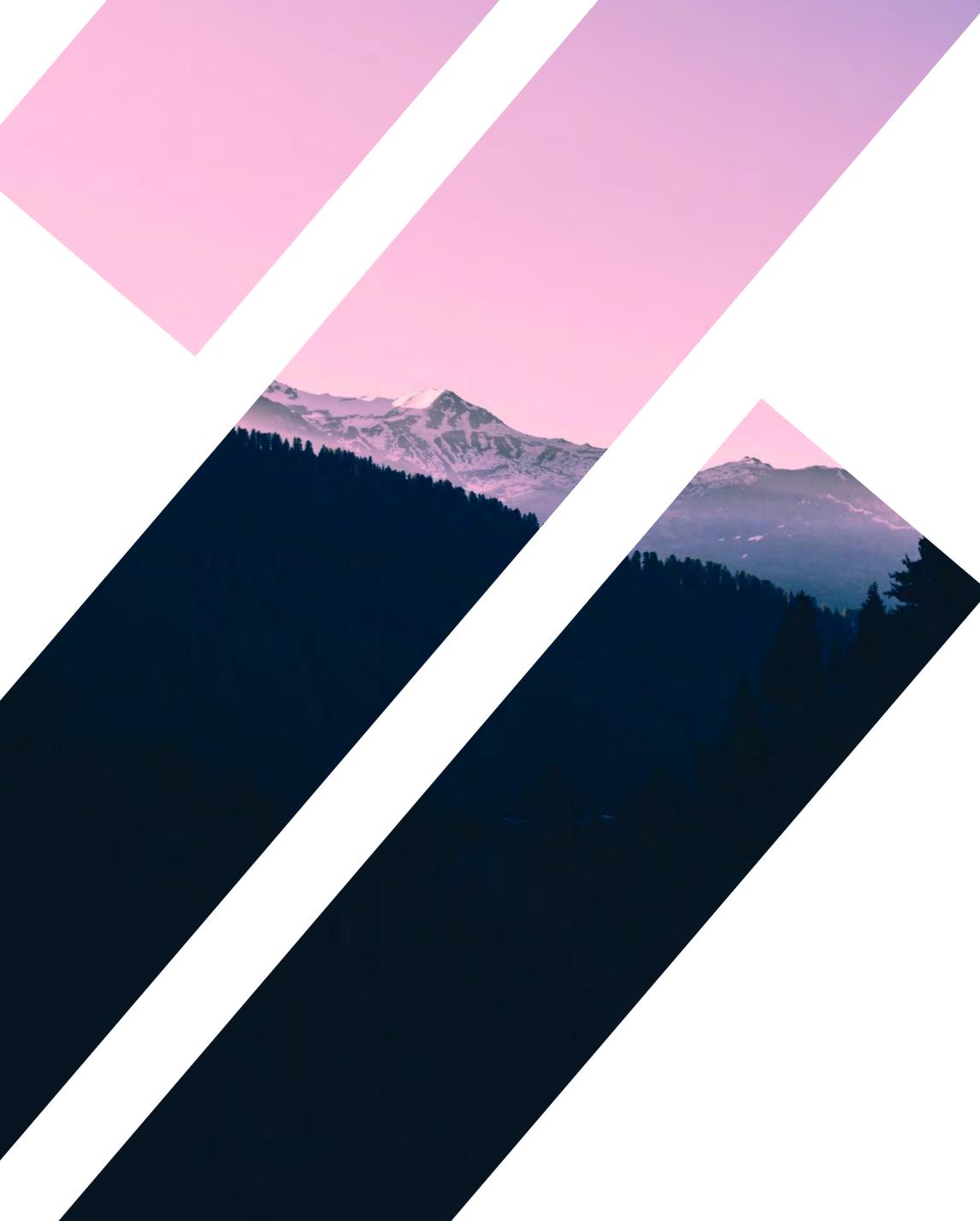
An individual can still be abusive and not be physically violent.

What causes domestic violence?

There are many theories to explain what gives rise to gender-based violence in our society

Among them: Feminist theory, Social Learning theory, Intergenerational Transmission of Violence, and Attachment theory





Violence does not stem from an innate evil

Violence stems from sets of structures and conditions that make it inevitable

Socioeconomic factors like:

Poverty, high unemployment, family fragmentation, economic hardship, and isolation from society

Reduce opportunities and weaken informal ties and social control

...Which foster increased crime and violence

Protective Factors

Strong social support and a sense of cohesion
and connection within a community

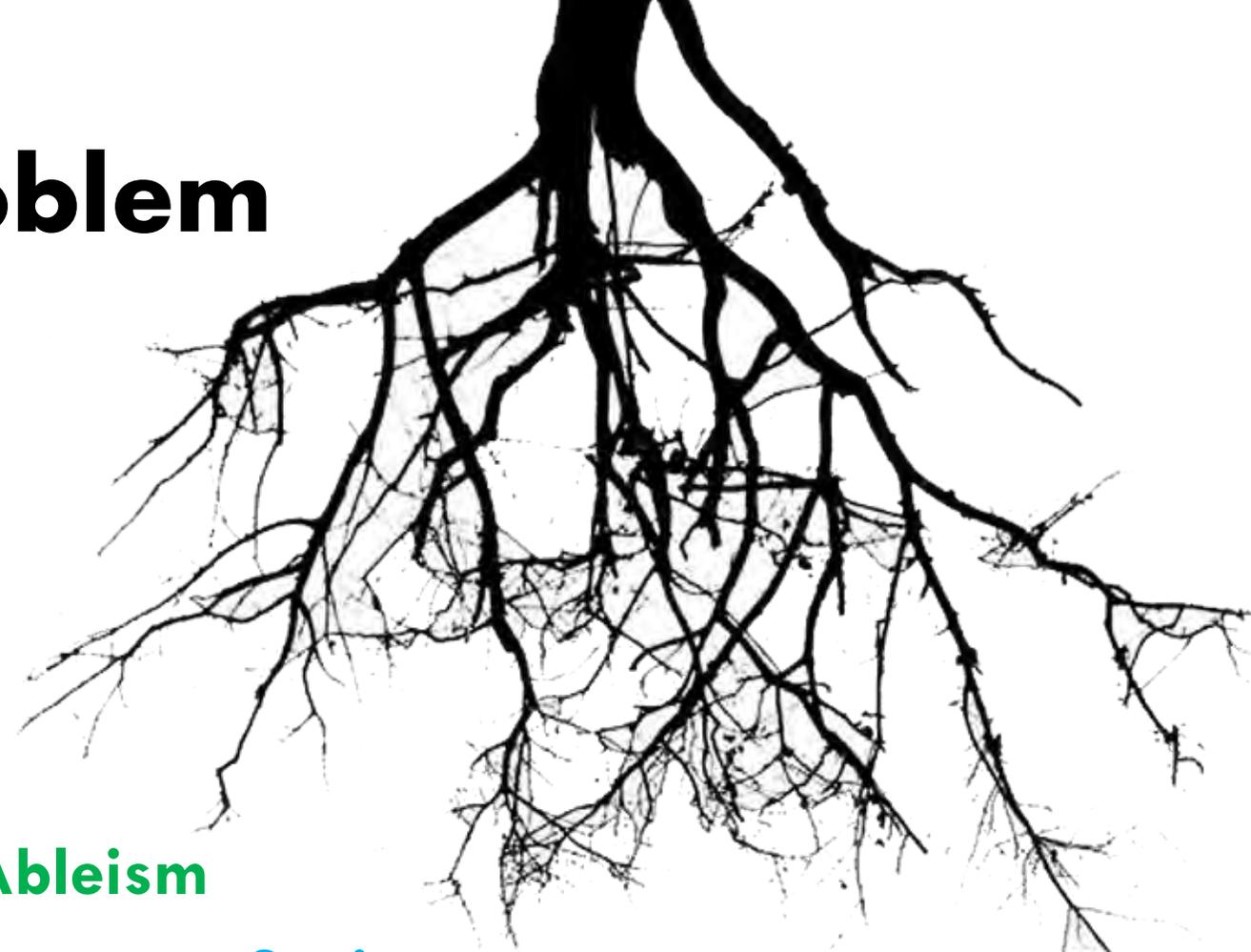
Strong familial and community resilience

Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships between
intimate partners and children



The Root of the Problem

Domestic and sexual violence is upheld by **systemic** and **institutionalized** oppression



Nativism

Ableism

Homophobia

Sexism

Heteronormativity

Ageism

Classism

Transphobia

Racism



People of Color issue

Loss of Control

Poverty

A woman problem

Mental Illness

Anger management problem

Stress

Culture

Substance Abuse

Married people problem

Lack of education

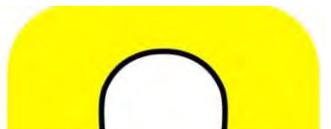
Communication issues

Hormones



Break

Think about how we talk about domestic violence in our society



Baltimore Ravens
@Ravens

Follow



Would You Rather?
Impossible Choices

- Honey, make me a sandwich.
- No, make it yourself.

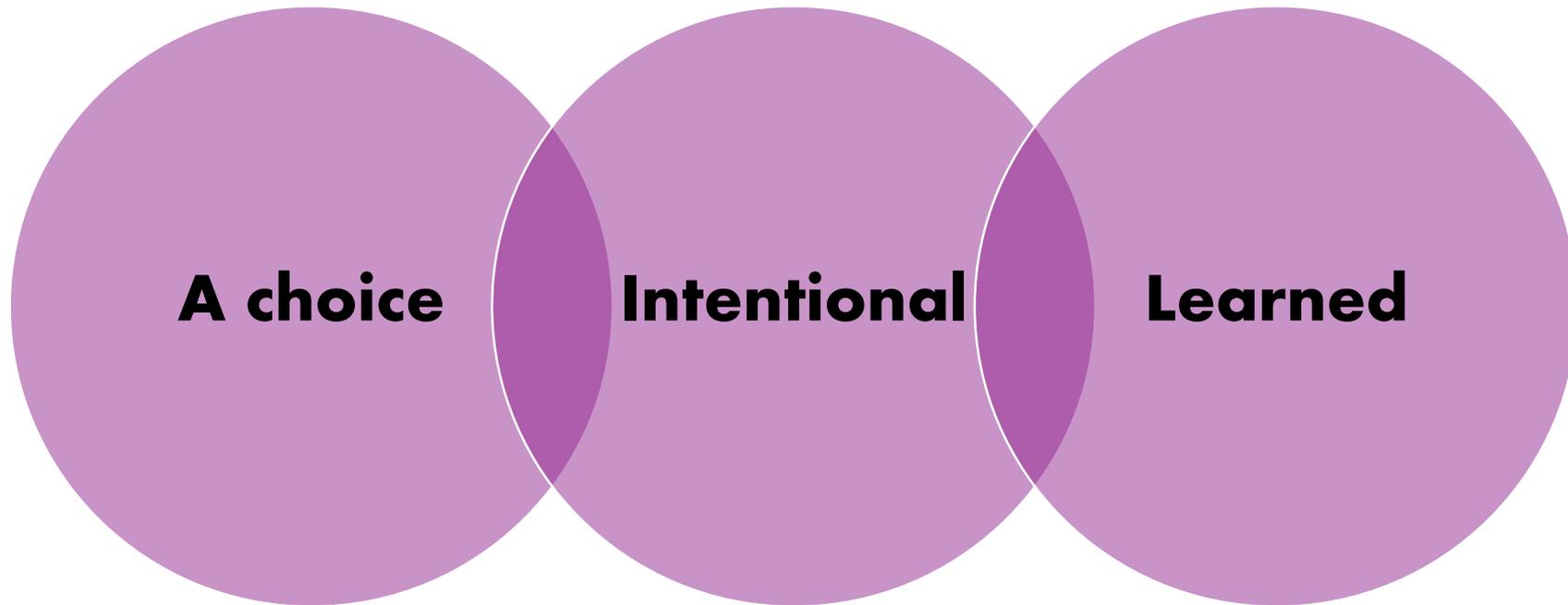
PLAY Ad

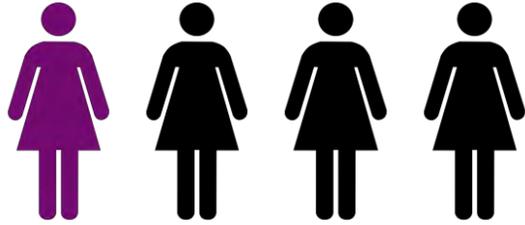
Paul Geo
I don
BUT
Lets

#imwithjohnny
6:50 PM - May 27, 2016
53 23 people are talking about this



Domestic violence is...





1 in 4 women



1 in 10 men

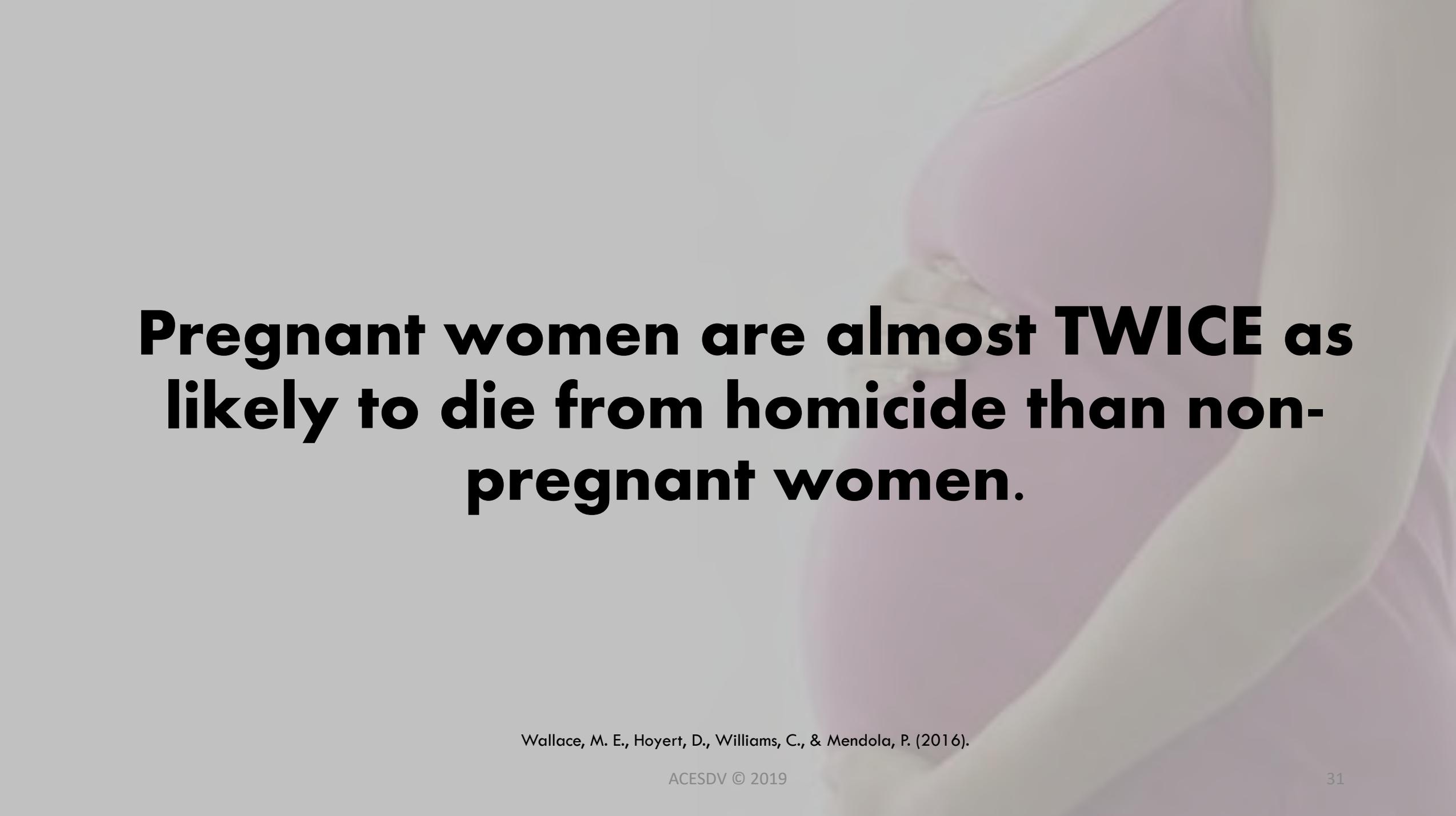
were victims of contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner with a negative impact such as injury, fear, concern for safety, needing services.

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2015 Data Brief.

The background of the slide features a faded image of a white Phoenix Police Department Mobile Command van parked on a street. The van has "PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT" and "MOBILE COMMAND" printed on its side. In the foreground, a yellow police tape with the words "POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS" is stretched across the scene. The overall image is semi-transparent to allow the text to be clearly visible.

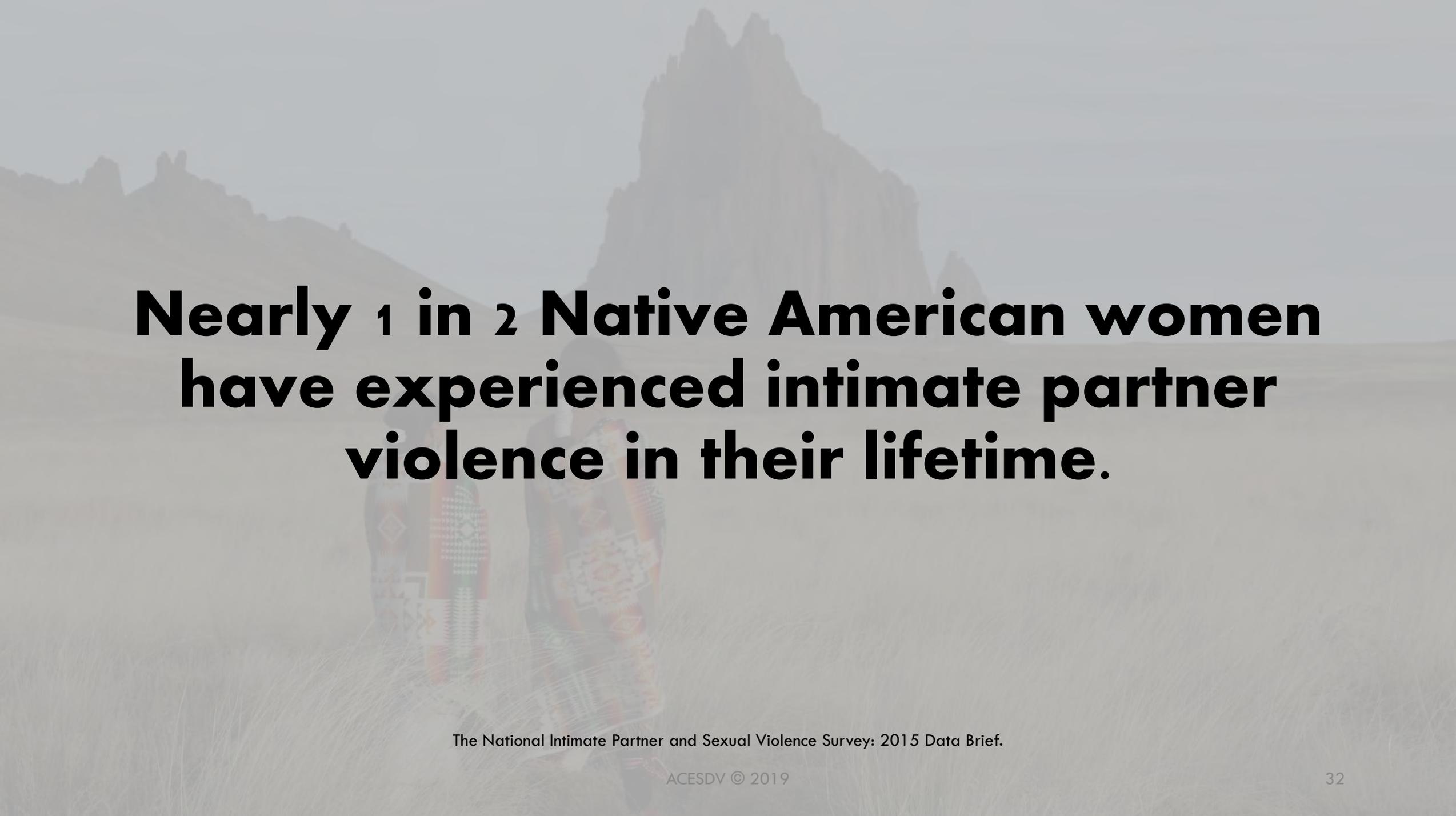
At least 86 people were killed in domestic violence-related homicides in Arizona in 2018.

Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence. (2018).



Pregnant women are almost **TWICE as likely to die from homicide than non-pregnant women.**

Wallace, M. E., Hoyert, D., Williams, C., & Mendola, P. (2016).



**Nearly 1 in 2 Native American women
have experienced intimate partner
violence in their lifetime.**

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2015 Data Brief.



One in 10 high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Love is Respect. (2019).

ACESDV © 2019

31-50% of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime.

Brown, T., & Herman, J. (2015). Intimate partner Violence and Sexual abuse Among LGBTQ people. The Williams Institute.

Who are Victims?

DV **can happen to anyone** – it does not discriminate based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, class, education, ability status, legal status, etc.

Do not possess a set of universal characteristics or personality traits

Victims of domestic violence are **not easily recognized** because they are not usually covered in marks or bruises
If there are injuries, victims have often **learned to conceal them** to avoid detection, suspicion, and shame

Victims are **often blamed or stigmatized** – making it harder to access help



Barriers to Leaving an Abusive Relationship

Money

Housing

Children/pregnancy

Employment

Lack of resources

Lack of social support

Disability

Culture/religion

Fear of police/authority

Geography

Pets

Legal status

Escalation of abuse

Partner promises

Who the partner is

Complicated systems

Confusion

Trauma

Fear/shame

Love/attachment

Leaving an abusive relationship is often the most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence

Leaving is not an event; it is a *process*.



Impact of Domestic Violence on Victims

General Injury

Acute and/or Chronic health problems

Psychological Problems

Posttraumatic Stress

Substance Use

Helplessness

Anger or Aggression

Depression and/or Anxiety

Denial or Minimization of the Abuse

Parenting & the Victim

The majority of victims of domestic violence are not bad, ineffective, or abusive parents

DV is one of many stressors that can negatively impact parenting

DV can compromise the child's attachment to the victim parent

Many victims, despite ongoing abuse, are supportive, nurturing parents who mediate the impact of their children's exposure to domestic violence

Strategies Victims Use to Protect Themselves & Their Children

Victims are the **experts** of their own lives and situations

Victims are able to **analyze** safety options, **assess** danger levels, and **decide** whether or not to take a certain approach

Victims often use very **creative methods to avoid and deescalate** their partner's abusive behavior

Protective strategies are **frequently misinterpreted** by laypersons and professionals who view the victim's behavior as **uncooperative, ineffective, or neglectful**

Because victims are very familiar with their partner's pattern of behavior, they can help the caseworker in **developing a safety plan that is effective for both the victim and the children**, especially when exploring options not previously considered



Examples of additional protective strategies:

Complying, placating, or colluding with the perpetrator

Minimizing, denying, or refusing to talk about the abuse for fear of making it worse

Leaving or staying in the relationship so the violence does not escalate

Fighting back or defying the abuser

Sending the children to a neighbor or family member's home

Refusing or not following through with services to avoid angering the abuser

Lying about the abuser's criminal activity or abuse of the children to avoid a possible attack

Trying to improve the relationship or finding help for the perpetrator

Who are Perpetrators?

Abusers **can be anyone** – they can be of any gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, class, education, ability status, legal status, etc.

Perpetrators are not always angry and hostile, but can be **charming, agreeable, and kind**

Differ in **patterns of abuse** and **levels of dangerousness**

Perpetrators generally do not believe they and their partners are equals

However, most abusers share the following:

Abuse their power in the relationship; have different public and private behavior; project blame; minimize or deny the abuse; rarely take responsibility

Perpetrators need **support** and **intervention** to end their violent behavior and any additional problems that compound that behavior

Indicators of Dangerousness

Threats or thoughts of homicide and suicide

Possession or access to weapons

Use of weapons in a threatening or intimidating manner

Extreme jealousy or obsession with the victim

Physical attacks, verbal threats, and stalking during a separation or divorce

Kidnapping or hostage taking

Sexual assault or rape

Prior abusive incidents that resulted in serious injury

History of violence with previous partners and children

Psychopathology or substance abuse

Parenting & the Perpetrator

Behaviors common among perpetrators that negatively impact children:

Authoritarian parenting style

Neglect, irresponsibility, lack of involvement

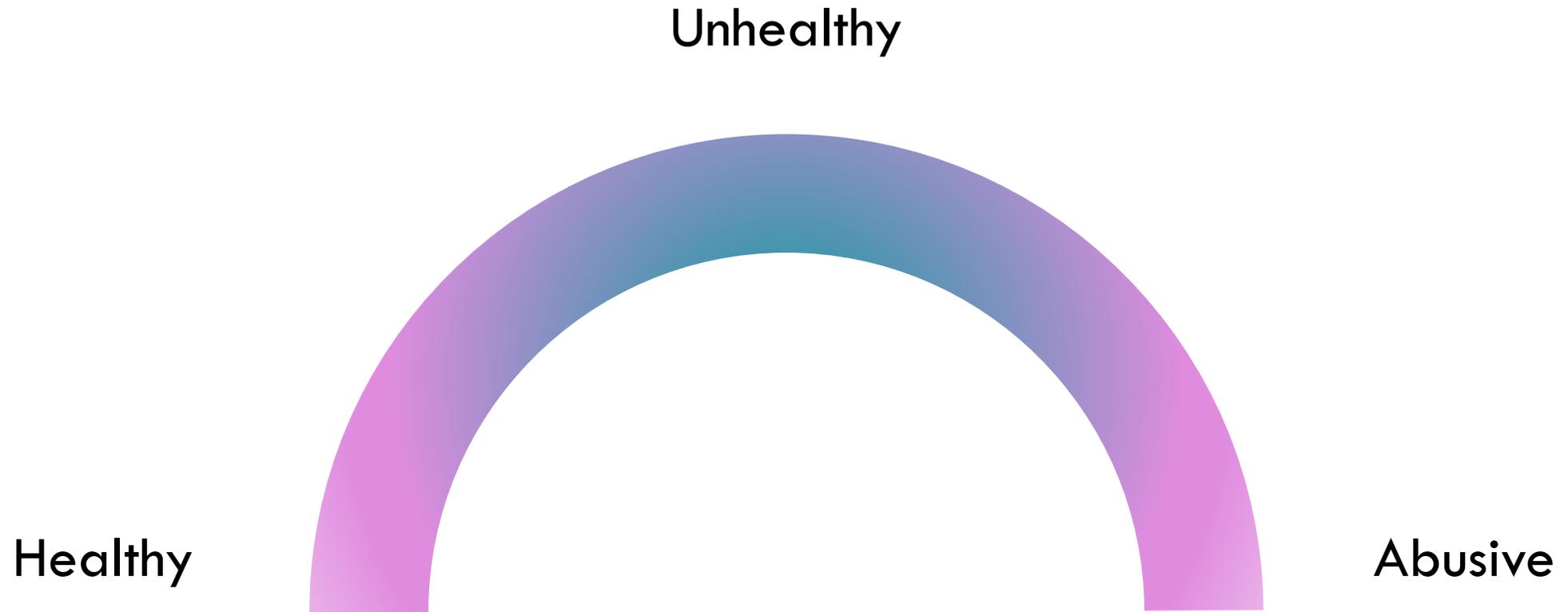
Undermining the victim parent

Self-centeredness

Manipulation

Children may experience feelings of loyalty, affection, or love towards the perpetrator; others may feel ambivalent

Child Protection Practices in Families Experiencing Domestic Violence



When does a relationship become abusive?

Guiding Principles

The safety of abused children often is **linked to the safety of the adult victims**. By helping victims of domestic violence secure protection, the well-being of the children also is enhanced.

Perpetrators of domestic violence who abuse their partner **also emotionally or psychologically harm their children**, even if the children are not physically or sexually harmed.

If the family's circumstances are clear and it is appropriate, **every effort should be made to keep the children in the care of the non-offending parent**.

Once domestic violence has been substantiated, the **perpetrators must be held solely responsible for the violence** while receiving interventions that address their abusive behaviors. DCS must collaborate with domestic violence programs and other community service providers to establish a system that holds abusers accountable for their actions.



Practice Recommendations for Assessing the Alleged Victim

Victims of DV are **not always compliant** clients
They may be defensive, angry, or uncooperative **due to fear** of losing their children or of risking further violence

DCS caseworkers **should not assume** that resistant or uncooperative alleged victims want or choose to be in violent relationships

Regardless of a victim's behavior, he or she and the children **deserve to be safe** and have access to services that will address the violence in their lives

Remember that **violence escalates** during periods of leaving or separation

DCS Practice Guidelines Assessing Safety in Families Experiencing Domestic Violence

Talk to children in a neutral and safe setting

Interview adult victims alone

Adult victims often have protective capacity to provide safety and stability for their children

During the safety assessment, look for attitudes and beliefs that are common among perpetrators of DV

Perpetrators of DV may also demonstrate protective capacities to be encouraged and strengthened

Cultural factors can create additional barriers to achieving safety for the adult victim and children

Children exposed to DV can be supported by the Child Safety Specialist in many ways

DV cases can present a risk to Child Safety Specialists



Harmful Practices

Threatening survivors with removal if _____

Asking DV service providers to be safety monitors

Demanding DV service providers give you information about a mutual client

Not obtaining proper releases of information

Threatening to delay reunification if a parent enters or is in shelter

Creating the same case plan for both parents

Requiring a survivor to obtain an OP

Practice Recommendations for Assessing the Alleged Perpetrator

Perpetrators **vary in their patterns** and levels of violent behavior

Some abusers will be **solicitous** and **cooperative** or even **charming** in an effort to avoid exposure and to decrease the caseworker's involvement with the family

Ideally, DCS caseworkers should **conduct the assessment in a public place**

Use **third party reports** when interviewing the alleged abuser

Focus on obtaining information about the alleged abuser's **behaviors** and the **degree** to which he or she accepts responsibility

Engage the alleged abuser in an assessment that is **respectful and structured**



Whose life is **made** smaller?

Who is **afraid** of whom?

Who **controls** or **makes the decisions** in the relationship?

Who has **more access** to financial and economic resources?

Enhancing Caseworker Safety and Support

Safety Considerations for Caseworkers

Conducting interviews or meetings **in public** or with another person present

Be **aware of your surroundings** when leaving the office or home

Notify a supervisor when a potentially dangerous client is meeting with you

Refrain from giving the perpetrator a **sense that you are afraid**

Immediately **end the interview** or visit if you do feel afraid

Inform the victim if their partner's anger has escalated, posing a risk to the victim or the children



Building Collaborative Responses

Partnering with Service Providers

Shadowing activities

Cross-training

Integrating case practice knowledge and expertise

Sharing information

For More Support...

Family Centered Strengths and Risk Assessment Interview and Documentation Guide

Arizona DV/SV Program List

Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence:
www.acesdv.org

Safe & Together Institute: www.safeandtogetherinstitute.com

National 24-hour DV Hotline: [800-799-SAFE \(7233\)](tel:800-799-SAFE)

Maricopa County DV Line for emergency shelter: [480-890-3039](tel:480-890-3039)

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: www.ncadv.org

Address Confidentiality Program: www.azsos.gov/services/acp

ACESDV Domestic Violence Response Team

Doreen Nicholas

DV Response Manager

Doreen@acesdv.org

Samantha Hinchey

DV Response Coordinator

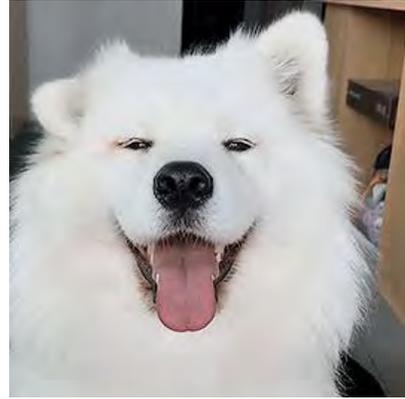
Samantha@acesdv.org

Ruby Barraza

DV Response Coordinator

Ruby@acesdv.org





Thank you!

