

FACT SHEET ABOUT HIV AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

There is a clear connection between domestic violence and HIV. In order to best support those living at this intersection it is critical that service providers understand how these two epidemics are connected and the unique barriers folks may face when attempting to access supportive services.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HIV

- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that can only infect humans and leads to weakening of the immune system - the body's system for fighting disease.
- HIV is transmitted through blood, semen, vaginal secretions, rectal fluids, and breast milk.¹
- One in four people living with HIV in the United States are women.²
- While there is currently no cure for HIV, early medical care and treatment have the greatest effect on prolonging life and lowering the risk of transmission.³



WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Domestic violence (DV), also known as intimate partner violence (IPV), is an act or pattern of acts involving the use or attempted use of physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, economic, or other forms of abusive behavior in order to harm, threaten, intimidate, harass, coerce, control, isolate, restrain, or monitor another person.⁴
- Domestic violence occurs in intimate relationships where the perpetrator and the victim are currently or previously have been dating, living together, married or divorced. They might have children in common or not.
- One in four women and one in ten men will experience severe domestic violence in their lifetime. About two in five transgender people will experience domestic violence as well.^{5 6}

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE INTERSECTION OF HIV AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- At **double the national rate**, 55% of women living with HIV have been found to experience DV; for men, it was found that 20% have experienced DV. ⁷
- Victims of domestic violence are **48% more likely** to be exposed to HIV transmission than those in non-violent relationships. ⁷
- Women experiencing DV are more likely to be exposed to HIV because they might...⁷
 - ▶ Be forced to have unprotected **sex with a partner living with HIV**
 - ▶ Have **limited ability to negotiate safe sex practices**
- Women living with HIV who have been recently abused are more than **4 times** as likely to experience **antiretroviral therapy failure** or to **not practice safe sex** compared to women who have not been recently abused. ⁸
- In a study of HIV service providers, 24% reported at least one patient who **disclosed their HIV status** and then **experienced physical abuse**. 45% of providers had patients who **feared physical abuse** upon disclosure. ⁹
- One study found that 21% of women, 12% of gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, and 8% of heterosexual men had experienced physical violence by their partner or someone close to them since their HIV diagnosis. Of those people, nearly 45% had experienced violence that they felt was related to their HIV status. ¹⁰



POWER & CONTROL AT THE INTERSECTION

The HIV status of the abusive partner, the victim, or both may be used to maintain control. Below are some tactics at this intersection:

Preventing a victim from attending medical appointments.

Withholding, disposing, or tampering with medications.

Threatening to expose their status - in person or via social media.

Restricting access to technology to seek HIV information or services.

[REQUEST A TRAINING](#)

ENDNOTES

- 1 What body fluids transmit HIV? <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/hiv-transmission/body-fluids.html>
- 2 HIV and Women: Knowledge of Status <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/gender/women/status-knowledge.html>
- 3 AIDS.gov, What is HIV/AIDS <http://www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/what-is-hiv-aids/>
- 4 The National Network to End Domestic Violence <https://nnedv.org/content/frequently-asked-questions-about-domestic-violence/>
- 5 Preventing Intimate Partner Violence <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html>
- 6 The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality. James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016).
- 7 Sullivan T. P. (2019). The intersection of intimate partner violence and HIV: detection, disclosure, discussion, and implications for treatment adherence. *Topics in antiviral medicine*, 27(2), 84–87.
- 8 Intersection of Intimate Partner Violence and HIV in Women https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv/13_243567_green_aag-a.pdf
- 9 Population Reports http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/PopulationReports.pdf
- 10 The link between intimate partner violence and HIV <https://www.catie.ca/prevention-in-focus/the-link-between-intimate-partner-violence-and-hiv>