

Intimate Partner Violence

Despite the current worldwide pandemic, the prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is still one of the top health concerns in the country. In fact, the incidence of IPV has increased during this pandemic. IPV can be best understood as a pattern of abusive behaviors — including physical abuse, sexual abuse, stalking, and psychological attacks by a current or former partner or spouse against another adult to gain, maintain, or regain power and control in the relationship. Tactics may occur only once but are typically repeated. These behaviors are intended to frighten, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, and often injure the person. Results can even be fatal.

The burden of IPV is not shared equally across all groups, with women and many racial, ethnic and sexual minority groups being disproportionately affected. However, IPV can happen to anyone including males. Approximately 1 in 4 women and nearly 1 in 10 men have experienced IPV. This type of violence can also occur among any couple. While IPV may include sexual intimacy, it can occur outside of this parameter as well.

IPV is exacerbated when victims are isolated. Mounting data suggests that domestic abuse is acting like an opportunistic infection, flourishing in the conditions created by the pandemic.

What to do if you know someone who may be experiencing IPV



Make time for them. If the person decides to disclose years of pent-up fear and frustration, you will not want to end the conversation because you have another commitment. At times, their availability may be limited but you can offer social connections or be willing to drop off a meal. Consider acts of kindness that may help them feel seen and supported. Be mindful that they may not have much personal freedom and could even be under surveillance so use wisdom for everyone's protection.

Listen without judgment. The decision to leave can be quite complex. Marriages, children, homes, pets, and finances are a few reasons victims of abuse feel they can't leave. Their self-esteem may be fragile so try to be patient

with them. Validate their feelings and offer compassion; not advice.

Connect them with the resources. Below are resources which can provide them with assistance on creating a safety plan. This type of planning is best left to the experts so encourage them to talk to the people who can provide help and guidance. Again, safety for everyone is paramount.



Practice your own self-care.

Knowing that someone you care about is being hurt can be stressful. Remind yourself that while you cannot make decisions for someone else, you can make sure that you are taking care of yourself. Once you have offered a listening ear, support, and community resources, it is important to focus on your own wellbeing and mental health.

LOCAL RESOURCES FOR IPV VICTIMS

- » **One Place Birmingham:** 205-453-7261, oneplacebirmingham.com
- » **Safe House:** 205-669-7233, safehouse.org
- » **YMCA Birmingham:** 1-205-322-4878 (HURT), ywcabham.org/domestic-violence-services-and-programs