

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE in the JEWISH COMMUNITY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Raising Awareness
and Understanding

A NATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT BY

jwi JEWISH WOMEN
INTERNATIONAL

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE in the JEWISH COMMUNITY

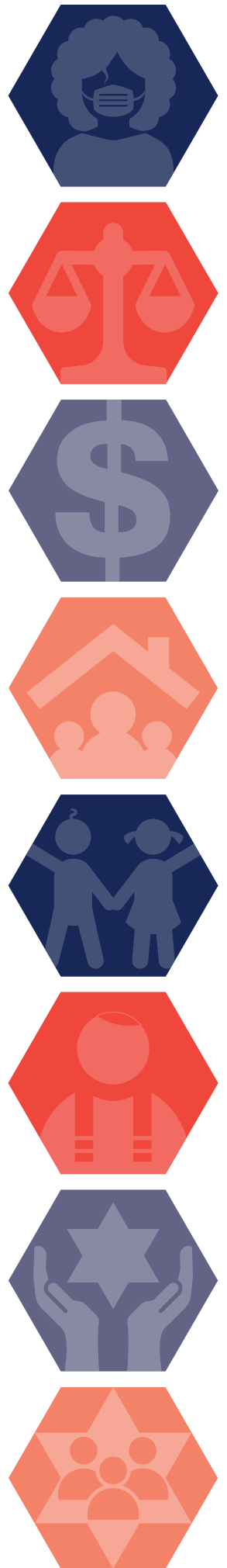
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Dear Colleague,

COVID-19 lifted the curtains that allowed us to hide the realities of our world that were too hard to face. As we sought sanctuary through mandated quarantines, protecting ourselves from the virus that lurked outside our homes, stories began to emerge of women locked down with their abusers. The added stressors of the pandemic ramped up the violence they had already been experiencing — unhealthy relationships became toxic; toxic relationships became violent; violent relationships became deadly. When opportunities to leave home — going to work, or simply walking a child to the school bus — were taken away, so too were opportunities to seek help. With job loss came further financial constraints to the possibility of leaving. Survivors shared that they hoped to contract the virus as thoughts of being sent to the hospital became the only means of escape.

Perhaps it was the isolation we were all feeling. Perhaps the horror of quarantining with an abuser was all too easy to understand. But, due to COVID, more people started thinking and talking about domestic violence. For JWI, our moment of awareness came decades ago, when a member was shot and killed by her estranged husband. For years, we have worked steadily to create prevention programs, to offer high-level training for professionals in the domestic violence and sexual assault prevention and response field, to build children's libraries in domestic violence shelters, to advocate for legislation that would support and protect all women and girls, and to empower women with financial literacy — all to build a world in which women could do more than live safely — they could thrive.

Slowly, we brought our Jewish community along with us, but not far enough. Domestic violence for too long was thought of as something that happened to others — not to Jewish women and surely, not at the hands of Jewish men. Yes, some philanthropists and advocates understood that domestic violence occurs in the Jewish community at the same rate as any other, but too few. And, yes, some philanthropists and advocates built shelters and services that while serving all survivors in their communities, also provided for the unique needs of Jewish survivors. But is it enough? If we asked providers what they really need, how would they answer?

With the generosity of Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, JWI embarked on an ambitious plan — to reach every domestic violence program serving the Jewish community and identify the gaps and needs of the Jewish clients they serve. This report is the culmination of that year-long assessment. Here we not only share our key findings, but offer recommendations to respond. Our earlier assessment conducted in 2003-2004 was the catalyst for a host of initiatives including prevention programs for teens and young adults; the Clergy Task Force on Domestic Abuse in the Jewish Community providing resources and trainings; the National Alliance to End Domestic and Sexual Violence offering monthly training webinars to the field; and the Interfaith Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, advocating for federal legislation and policies that support survivors.

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As we did then, JWI will follow this report with real actions and new initiatives. We learned through this assessment that each community is struggling with similar needs at the hyper-local level and in response, JWI is proposing a bold, national vision and will be forming a national center that will work in partnership to meet the systemic needs of survivors and to support the local Jewish programs and advocates that serve them.

We are excited by the prospect of moving the needle once again — from our initial work to increase awareness that Jewish homes and families experience domestic violence to creating robust responses to meet the most serious needs within our community. We anticipate that this work will ultimately serve as a model for other faith communities struggling with similar issues and will be sharing our successes and challenges with them.

I want to express my deep gratitude to the extraordinary work of JWI's lead project team: Deborah Rosenbloom, J.D./M.P.A., JWI's chief program officer; Dorian Karp, M.P.A., JWI's director of advocacy and policy; and Roberta "Rob" Valente, J.D., whose deep experience includes serving as the founding director of the ABA's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence. Together they conceptualized the project, developed the research tools, led the initiative, analyzed the data, and wrote this report. They led with passion and intelligence, and together with JWI's board of trustees, I thank each of them.

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As the world slowly begins to re-open, I pray that the curtains raised will never close. That our eyes, ears, and hearts will remain open to the suffering of others. And, that our hands will be dedicated to building a world in which all women may thrive.

B'shalom,



Meredith Jacobs, CEO
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For many people trying to survive a global pandemic, home has been the anchor that provides safety and security against the physical dangers of the outside world. But “home” has a different meaning for survivors of domestic violence. “Home” is an uncomfortable, unsettling, and even dangerous place for a survivor who has already been experiencing the efforts of an abuser to physically and emotionally control her life.

The pandemic has created heightened risks for women and families as stay-at-home orders, unemployment, financial hardship, and trauma correlate with an increase of gender-based violence. This moment in time when each of us is experiencing the isolation that a victim lives in every day is a unique opportunity to drive the field forward with new understandings about the dynamics and impacts of domestic abuse; legislation that supports the needs of survivors and the advocates who serve them; and a commitment to prioritize the needs of Jewish families experiencing domestic violence.

We are challenged as a community to rethink whether and how survivors’ needs for safety, financial stability, and a peaceful home in which to raise their children are being met. This challenge coincides with the field’s questioning of the response models used for decades in responding to domestic violence. We can take this opportunity to re-examine our reliance on systems that have not been serving survivors of domestic violence well, like the civil and criminal justice systems, the child welfare systems, the government benefits systems, and our economic and employment systems. None of these systems were developed with the safety or independence of survivors in mind. Instead, we have long been shoe-horning the needs of survivors into these inadequate systems, which more often re-victimize survivors than help them.



We are at a crossroads.

As the domestic violence field is moving toward survivor-centered and community-based responses to violence, the Jewish community can choose to do the same. We know how important community is for survivors and our community has so much to offer. What we are finding is not that Jewish survivors' needs are different on the macro level from mainstream survivors' needs, but in the case of Jewish survivors, there are additional layers of communal, cultural, and faith-focused issues.

With generous support from Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, Jewish Women International (JWI) set out to conduct the 2020-2021 National Needs Assessment of Domestic Abuse in the Jewish Community in order to grow our collective understanding of the struggles and needs of Jewish victims and survivors of domestic violence, and develop a collaborative action plan that prioritizes these needs. This report is the culmination of these efforts.

The goal of this project is to determine the needs of Jewish victims and the advocates who serve them and drive new funding, advocacy and awareness to meet those needs. We hope this project results in 1) increased awareness about the experiences of Jewish families experiencing abuse, 2) a roadmap of the programmatic, funding and advocacy priorities that support survivors, and 3) new funding supporting collaborations promoting culturally-sensitive coordinated community responses to domestic violence in the Jewish community.

This needs assessment is not a quantitative survey, although we have gathered some basic statistics from the programs. Rather the heart of the knowledge gained is through conversations with survivors, the professionals providing direct services to them, and with clergy, all of which yielded rich qualitative data.

Over the last two decades, JWI and many other organizations and dedicated individuals have worked hard to dispel any doubt that domestic violence happens in Jewish homes and relationships. Now there is no doubt; but there is still a reluctance to offer a warm and inclusive place within our communities for victims and survivors. All too often we place a higher value on the 'macher', the donor, the well-connected, than on the survivor. We still ask 'why doesn't she leave?' not recognizing that she has nowhere to go. Without adequate legal support, safe housing within the Jewish community, and means to build economic security, survivors remain vulnerable and victimized. Until we prioritize the safety of the survivor over the abuser we are failing. We can do better. Working together we can develop survivor-centered and trauma-informed supports, enabling survivors and their children to feel safe, welcomed and nurtured as they move forward on their journey to healing and wholeness.

We have a unique opportunity opened by the rise in public awareness of the issue during the pandemic, to drive the field forward with new understandings about the impacts of domestic abuse; legislation that supports the needs of survivors and the advocates who serve them; and a commitment from the Jewish community to prioritize the well-being and safety of Jewish families experiencing domestic violence.

The question is not ‘does it happen in Jewish homes?’ We know that it does.

The question is ‘why do we tolerate abuse?’ Why do we privilege perceived power? These questions are not unique to our community — but we are in a unique position to change our responses. To amend the institutional betrayal experienced by survivors who are trying to be safe within their... our... community. We can do better. We must do better.

We have learned this is not a huge burden for the community when the whole community shares in the process — many small contributions can save a life. Our community prides itself on taking care of the vulnerable — and survivors of violence are among those who are most vulnerable. The past 20 years the Jewish community has taken great strides in acknowledging that our homes are not immune to abuse and violence, and now we are asking the community to take the next step forward — to put the safety and well-being of the survivor and children at the forefront, ensuring that survivors have the skills and connections to gain

meaningful employment, that affordable homes are available to them, and that their legal needs are met. But it’s not just about donating money, it’s making certain survivors are included in and not shunned by the community. That they are invited to Shabbat meals, welcomed at the Jewish Community Center, and know their children are safe in a school that supports them spiritually and educationally. That friends are still friends. That they are not in danger of losing their community as they rebuild their lives.

We incorrectly blame survivors for leaving and going back. Rather, our focus should be on the lack of funding for services that promote their long-term well-being. We should acknowledge that we failed to provide those services. The survivors we spoke with shared their pain in leaving their homes and community when escaping violence, and feeling shunned, marginalized, and disconnected. Survivors need to feel supported by the community in order to heal.

Following are highlights of **key findings** and **recommendations** for addressing field-wide gaps.

For the complete listing of recommendations, please see the full report.



COVID

Covid-19 is having a profound impact on the safety of survivors. Direct service delivery is being recalibrated to address the current emergency by offering hybrid services that rely on telehealth technology. Providers have concerns about maintaining confidentiality while providing services virtually as well as the costs associated with telehealth. These virtual services have reduced barriers for some survivors seeking services and programs intend to continue delivering hybrid services after the pandemic subsides.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increased funding needs to be provided to the programs in order for them to continue delivering hybrid models of service (remote and in-person) developed during the pandemic.
- Funding for technology and confidentiality resources are particularly important to protect the safety of survivors.
- Training and best practices for using technology to address survivors' needs are critical.



Legal

Legal representation addressing the complex issues such as child custody, divorce, and equitable financial distribution is the top identified key gap. Pro-bono lawyers are an inadequate resource to meet the long-term legal needs survivors face. In many cases survivors are left to represent themselves. Legal work in the Jewish community is further complicated by a husband's ability to withhold the get or religious divorce decree as a means of control over his spouse.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Adequate funding for all Jewish domestic violence programs so that each program is staffed with at least one trauma-informed attorney with expertise in family law to represent survivors in all court and legal proceedings.
- A clearinghouse of motions and briefs on typical issues facing domestic violence survivors run by seasoned attorneys should be created, managed and maintained to reduce the amount of time and money each program needs to spend on legal research.
- Ongoing training and mentoring and peer support should be available to attorneys, particularly around child custody and the specific needs of Jewish survivors.



Economic Security

To reclaim their independence and self-sufficiency survivors need income and financial resources. Financial abuse makes it challenging, if not impossible, for survivors to secure employment, access credit, and obtain housing. Survivors need jobs that allow for flexibility given their unique challenges. Survivors need increased access to affordable childcare, transportation, and other services in order to work outside of the home in traditional 9-5 workplaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop a national trauma-informed and victim-centered strengths and asset-focused skills training program for both traditional and flexible work environments
- Encourage financial institutions to provide support, low-interest loans, cash assistance, and other services that expand long-term economic security.
- Connect and mentor survivors as they work to enhance their economic security.



Housing

Survivors want to remain in their community and continue to have access to their synagogues, schools, youth groups, and Jewish life. There is a significant lack of transitional and affordable permanent housing in the Jewish community. Government subsidized housing is not readily available in many Jewish communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Convene Jewish community leaders, real estate investors, and funders to address the lack of transitional and long-term housing for survivors in their community.
- Create a funding mechanism that recognizes the impact of financial abuse, most notably how abuse destroys credit and thereby inhibits access to traditional sources of loans and credit, so that survivors can access low interest loans to allow them to rent or buy housing in the Jewish community.
- Explore a partnership with Airbnb to help meet the need for transitional and long term housing in communities.
- Explore a partnership with Lyft to help with transportation costs of moving.



Children

The number-one reason women stay in abusive relationships is because of their children. They fear losing their children in custody battles to the abuser, the dangers of court ordered visitation, and other traumatizing actions. Often women choose to leave their abuser when their children's safety is threatened. Children who witness violence are at heightened risk for anxiety and depression, poor performance in school and aggressive behaviors. Increased support by the community will help build children's resiliency and well-being well into the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Help the children who witness domestic violence build their resiliency by ensuring they feel a sense of belonging in the Jewish community.
- All Jewish youth serving organizations, including camps, schools, youth groups, and athletic teams, must have ongoing training to understand and support children witnesses of domestic violence.



Clergy

Two-thirds of clergy respondents reported that they have been approached by victims of domestic abuse and were often the first professional the survivor approached. Clergy seek more training in order to feel more confident in supporting survivors. Clergy want collaboration and new partnerships with Jewish domestic violence victim service programs to build their capacity to address domestic violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- All rabbinical and cantorial seminaries should incorporate victim-centered trauma-informed domestic violence training into curricula. Training must be ongoing throughout clergy's professional life.
- Clergy and clergy organizations must develop deeper collaborations with local domestic violence providers.
- Clergy and clergy organizations should be engaging in regular conversations about domestic violence in sermons, statements, and public awareness to create safe spaces for survivors to come forward.



Culturally-Specific Jewish Programs

Jewish domestic violence programs serve a unique need, providing survivors a safe space to heal. This is difficult, emotionally draining work and advocates often feel isolated. Peer-to-peer support forums are an invaluable tool for advocates to connect, learn, share, and support each other. While Jewish programs may be members of larger mainstream umbrella organizations or state coalitions, a noticeable gap is the existence of an umbrella organization specifically meeting the needs of Jewish domestic violence programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create a national umbrella organization to support all the Jewish domestic violence providers and advocates by providing to specialized trainings, advocacy, and support, as well as connecting advocates through conferences, newsletters, virtual gatherings and events.
- Continue peer to peer support forums launched as part of JWI's Needs Assessment.
- Establish Jewish domestic violence programs in those Jewish communities where there are none and establish a national hotline to enable Jewish survivors from anywhere in the country to access help.
- Fund programs to ensure they are fully staffed and able to provide survivors with equally robust services to their mainstream counterparts.



Jewish Community Centering Survivors

The Jewish community is failing survivors and their children by not centering their needs. Survivors value the Jewish community but often feel stigmatized by it. Communities too often prioritize the macher over the victim. Men are still withholding the *get* as a means of asserting power over their wives even after a civil divorce has been granted.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Tackle such issues as *get* abuse, privileging the macher, and stigmatizing the survivor by building survivor centered responses to domestic violence in Jewish homes.
- Implement trauma-informed and victim-centered training and policies for organizations such as day schools, summer camps, synagogues etc. to support survivors and their children.
- Prioritize public awareness and educational programs for community members to understand what survivors experience and learn how to support them, incorporate healthy relationship programs in schools, and disseminate awareness campaigns to normalize signing Halachic pre- and post-nuptial agreements.



There is a real opportunity for the Jewish community to step up and take a lead in supporting survivors and creating a community where survivors and their children feel a sense of belonging.

Survivors' healing and independence depends on the Jewish community's capacity and willingness to meet both their short and long-term needs through new collaborations, partnerships, and funding.



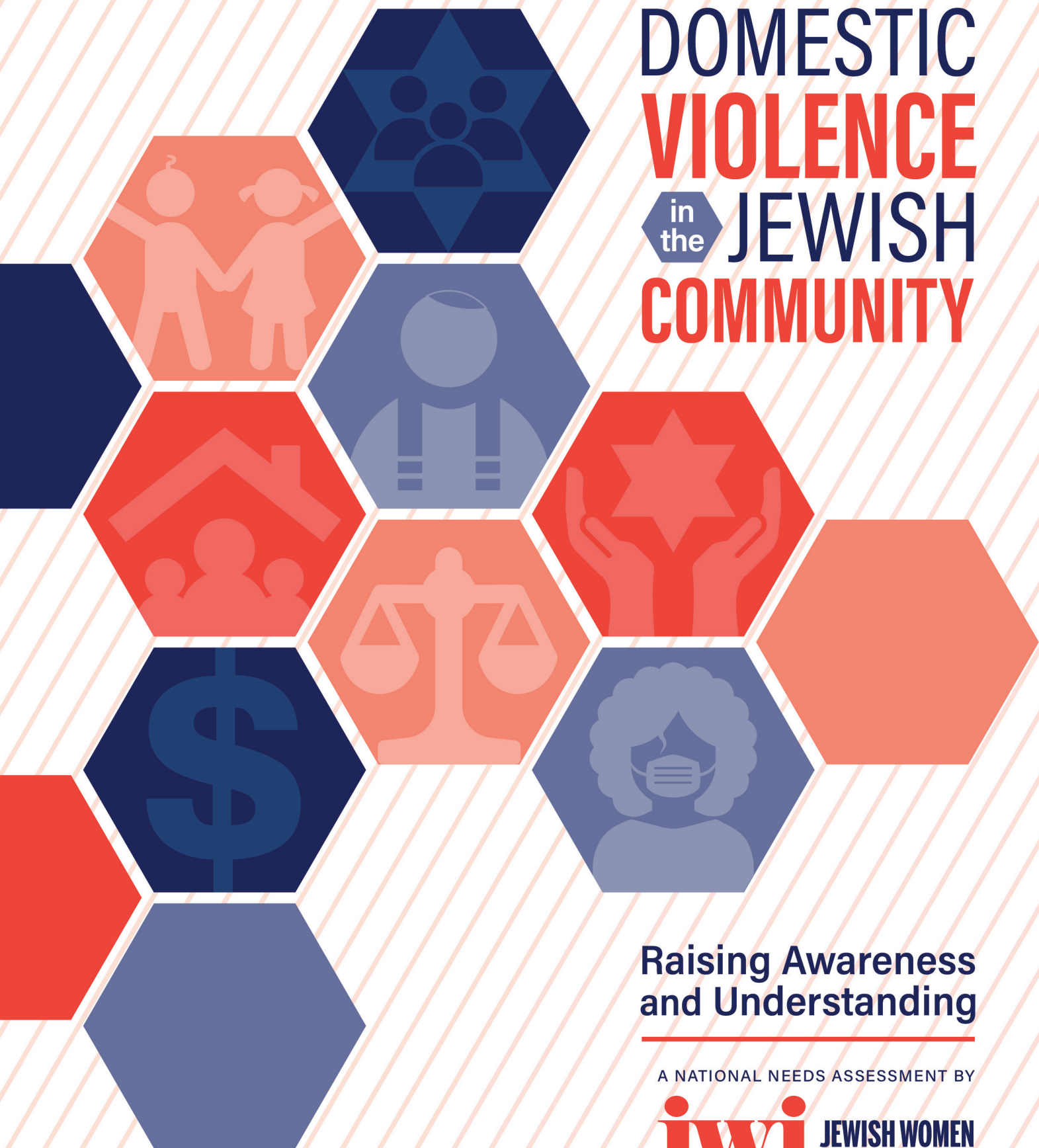
Jewish Women International (JWI) is the leading Jewish organization working to empower women and girls by ensuring and protecting their safety, health, rights, and economic security; promoting and celebrating inter-generational leadership; and inspiring civic participation and community engagement. Inspired by our legacy of progressive women's leadership and guided by our Jewish values, JWI works to ensure that all women and girls - of every race, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability - thrive in healthy relationships, control their financial futures, and realize the full potential of their personal strength.

FUNDING FOR THIS WORK WAS GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY



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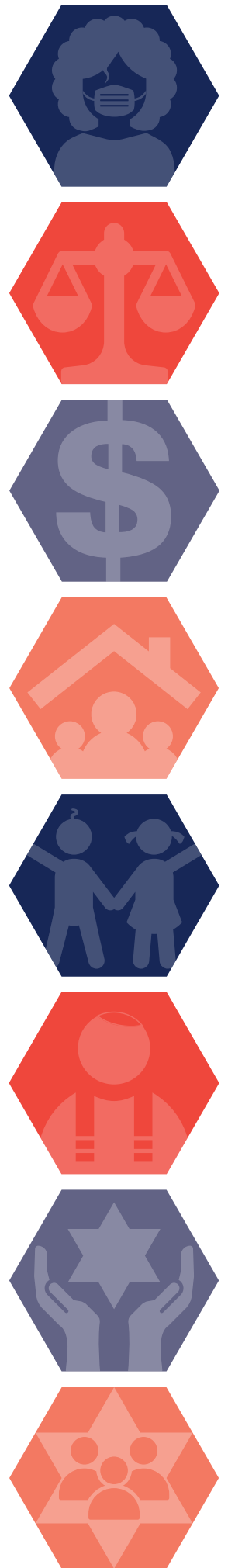
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B'shalom,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meredith Jacobs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Meredith" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Jacobs".

*Meredith Jacobs, CEO
Jewish Women International*

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We are challenged as a community to rethink whether and how survivors’ needs for safety, financial stability, and a peaceful home in which to raise their children are being met. This challenge coincides with the field’s questioning of the response models used for decades in responding to domestic violence. We can take this opportunity to re-examine our reliance on systems that have not been serving survivors of domestic violence well, like the civil and criminal justice systems, the child welfare systems, the government benefits systems, and our economic and employment systems. None of these systems were developed with the safety or independence of survivors in mind. Instead, we have long been shoe-horning the needs of survivors into these inadequate systems, which more often re-victimize survivors than help them.



We are at a crossroads.

As the domestic violence field is moving toward survivor-centered and community-based responses to violence, the Jewish community can choose to do the same. We know how important community is for survivors and our community has so much to offer. What we are finding is not that Jewish survivors' needs are different on the macro level from mainstream survivors' needs, but in the case of Jewish survivors, there are additional layers of communal, cultural, and faith-focused issues.

With generous support from Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, Jewish Women International (JWI) set out to conduct the 2020-2021 National Needs Assessment of Domestic Abuse in the Jewish Community in order to grow our collective understanding of the struggles and needs of Jewish victims and survivors of domestic violence, and develop a collaborative action plan that prioritizes these needs. This report is the culmination of these efforts.

The goal of this project is to determine the needs of Jewish victims and the advocates who serve them and drive new funding, advocacy and awareness to meet those needs. We hope this project results in 1) increased awareness about the experiences of Jewish families experiencing abuse, 2) a roadmap of the programmatic, funding and advocacy priorities that support survivors, and 3) new funding supporting collaborations promoting culturally-sensitive coordinated community responses to domestic violence in the Jewish community.

This needs assessment is not a quantitative survey, although we have gathered some basic statistics from the programs. Rather the heart of the knowledge gained is through conversations with survivors, the professionals providing direct services to them, and with clergy, all of which yielded rich qualitative data.

Over the last two decades, JWI and many other organizations and dedicated individuals have worked hard to dispel any doubt that domestic violence happens in Jewish homes and relationships. Now there is no doubt; but there is still a reluctance to offer a warm and inclusive place within our communities for victims and survivors. All too often we place a higher value on the 'macher', the donor, the well-connected, than on the survivor. We still ask 'why doesn't she leave?' not recognizing that she has nowhere to go. Without adequate legal support, safe housing within the Jewish community, and means to build economic security, survivors remain vulnerable and victimized. Until we prioritize the safety of the survivor over the abuser we are failing. We can do better. Working together we can develop survivor-centered and trauma-informed supports, enabling survivors and their children to feel safe, welcomed and nurtured as they move forward on their journey to healing and wholeness.

We have a unique opportunity opened by the rise in public awareness of the issue during the pandemic, to drive the field forward with new understandings about the impacts of domestic abuse; legislation that supports the needs of survivors and the advocates who serve them; and a commitment from the Jewish community to prioritize the well-being and safety of Jewish families experiencing domestic violence.

The question is not ‘does it happen in Jewish homes?’ We know that it does.

The question is ‘why do we tolerate abuse?’ Why do we privilege perceived power? These questions are not unique to our community — but we are in a unique position to change our responses. To amend the institutional betrayal experienced by survivors who are trying to be safe within their... our... community. We can do better. We must do better.

We have learned this is not a huge burden for the community when the whole community shares in the process — many small contributions can save a life. Our community prides itself on taking care of the vulnerable — and survivors of violence are among those who are most vulnerable. The past 20 years the Jewish community has taken great strides in acknowledging that our homes are not immune to abuse and violence, and now we are asking the community to take the next step forward — to put the safety and well-being of the survivor and children at the forefront, ensuring that survivors have the skills and connections to gain

meaningful employment, that affordable homes are available to them, and that their legal needs are met. But it’s not just about donating money, it’s making certain survivors are included in and not shunned by the community. That they are invited to Shabbat meals, welcomed at the Jewish Community Center, and know their children are safe in a school that supports them spiritually and educationally. That friends are still friends. That they are not in danger of losing their community as they rebuild their lives.

We incorrectly blame survivors for leaving and going back. Rather, our focus should be on the lack of funding for services that promote their long-term well-being. We should acknowledge that we failed to provide those services. The survivors we spoke with shared their pain in leaving their homes and community when escaping violence, and feeling shunned, marginalized, and disconnected. Survivors need to feel supported by the community in order to heal.

Following are highlights of **key findings** and **recommendations** for addressing field-wide gaps.

For the complete listing of recommendations, please see the full report.



COVID

Covid-19 is having a profound impact on the safety of survivors. Direct service delivery is being recalibrated to address the current emergency by offering hybrid services that rely on telehealth technology. Providers have concerns about maintaining confidentiality while providing services virtually as well as the costs associated with telehealth. These virtual services have reduced barriers for some survivors seeking services and programs intend to continue delivering hybrid services after the pandemic subsides.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increased funding needs to be provided to the programs in order for them to continue delivering hybrid models of service (remote and in-person) developed during the pandemic.
- Funding for technology and confidentiality resources are particularly important to protect the safety of survivors.
- Training and best practices for using technology to address survivors' needs are critical.



Legal

Legal representation addressing the complex issues such as child custody, divorce, and equitable financial distribution is the top identified key gap. Pro-bono lawyers are an inadequate resource to meet the long-term legal needs survivors face. In many cases survivors are left to represent themselves. Legal work in the Jewish community is further complicated by a husband's ability to withhold the get or religious divorce decree as a means of control over his spouse.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Adequate funding for all Jewish domestic violence programs so that each program is staffed with at least one trauma-informed attorney with expertise in family law to represent survivors in all court and legal proceedings.
- A clearinghouse of motions and briefs on typical issues facing domestic violence survivors run by seasoned attorneys should be created, managed and maintained to reduce the amount of time and money each program needs to spend on legal research.
- Ongoing training and mentoring and peer support should be available to attorneys, particularly around child custody and the specific needs of Jewish survivors.



Economic Security

To reclaim their independence and self-sufficiency, survivors need income and financial resources. Financial abuse makes it challenging, if not impossible, for survivors to secure employment, access credit, and obtain housing. Survivors need jobs that allow for flexibility given their unique challenges. Survivors need increased access to affordable childcare, transportation, and other services in order to work outside of the home in traditional 9-5 workplaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop a national trauma-informed and victim-centered strengths and asset-focused skills training program for both traditional and flexible work environments
- Encourage financial institutions to provide support, low-interest loans, cash assistance, and other services that expand long-term economic security.
- Connect and mentor survivors as they work to enhance their economic security.



Housing

Survivors want to remain in their community and continue to have access to their synagogues, schools, youth groups, and Jewish life. There is a significant lack of transitional and affordable permanent housing in the Jewish community. Government subsidized housing is not readily available in many Jewish communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Convene Jewish community leaders, real estate investors, and funders to address the lack of transitional and long-term housing for survivors in their community.
- Create a funding mechanism that recognizes the impact of financial abuse, most notably how abuse destroys credit and thereby inhibits access to traditional sources of loans and credit, so that survivors can access low interest loans to allow them to rent or buy housing in the Jewish community.
- Explore a partnership with Airbnb to help meet the need for transitional and long term housing in communities.
- Explore a partnership with Lyft to help with transportation costs of moving.



Children

The number-one reason women stay in abusive relationships is because of their children. They fear losing their children in custody battles to the abuser, the dangers of court ordered visitation, and other traumatizing actions. Often women choose to leave their abuser when their children's safety is threatened. Children who witness violence are at heightened risk for anxiety and depression, poor performance in school and aggressive behaviors. Increased support by the community will help build children's resiliency and well-being well into the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Help the children who witness domestic violence build their resiliency by ensuring they feel a sense of belonging in the Jewish community.
- All Jewish youth serving organizations, including camps, schools, youth groups, and athletic teams, must have ongoing training to understand and support children witnesses of domestic violence.



Clergy

Two-thirds of clergy respondents reported that they have been approached by victims of domestic abuse and were often the first professional the survivor approached. Clergy seek more training in order to feel more confident in supporting survivors. Clergy want collaboration and new partnerships with Jewish domestic violence victim service programs to build their capacity to address domestic violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- All rabbinical and cantorial seminaries should incorporate victim-centered trauma-informed domestic violence training into curricula. Training must be ongoing throughout clergy's professional life.
- Clergy and clergy organizations must develop deeper collaborations with local domestic violence providers.
- Clergy and clergy organizations should be engaging in regular conversations about domestic violence in sermons, statements, and public awareness to create safe spaces for survivors to come forward.



Culturally-Specific Jewish Programs

Jewish domestic violence programs serve a unique need, providing survivors a safe space to heal. This is difficult, emotionally draining work and advocates often feel isolated. Peer-to-peer support forums are an invaluable tool for advocates to connect, learn, share, and support each other. While Jewish programs may be members of larger mainstream umbrella organizations or state coalitions, a noticeable gap is the existence of an umbrella organization specifically meeting the needs of Jewish domestic violence programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create a national umbrella organization to support all the Jewish domestic violence providers and advocates by providing to specialized trainings, advocacy, and support, as well as connecting advocates through conferences, newsletters, virtual gatherings and events.
- Continue peer to peer support forums launched as part of JWI's Needs Assessment.
- Establish Jewish domestic violence programs in those Jewish communities where there are none and establish a national hotline to enable Jewish survivors from anywhere in the country to access help.
- Fund programs to ensure they are fully staffed and able to provide survivors with equally robust services to their mainstream counterparts.



Jewish Community Centering Survivors

The Jewish community is failing survivors and their children by not centering their needs. Survivors value the Jewish community but often feel stigmatized by it. Communities too often prioritize the macher over the victim. Men are still withholding the *get* as a means of asserting power over their wives even after a civil divorce has been granted.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Tackle such issues as *get* abuse, privileging the macher, and stigmatizing the survivor by building survivor centered responses to domestic violence in Jewish homes.
- Implement trauma-informed and victim-centered training and policies for organizations such as day schools, summer camps, synagogues etc. to support survivors and their children.
- Prioritize public awareness and educational programs for community members to understand what survivors experience and learn how to support them, incorporate healthy relationship programs in schools, and disseminate awareness campaigns to normalize signing Halachic pre- and post-nuptial agreements.



There is a real opportunity for the Jewish community to step up and take a lead in supporting survivors and creating a community where survivors and their children feel a sense of belonging.

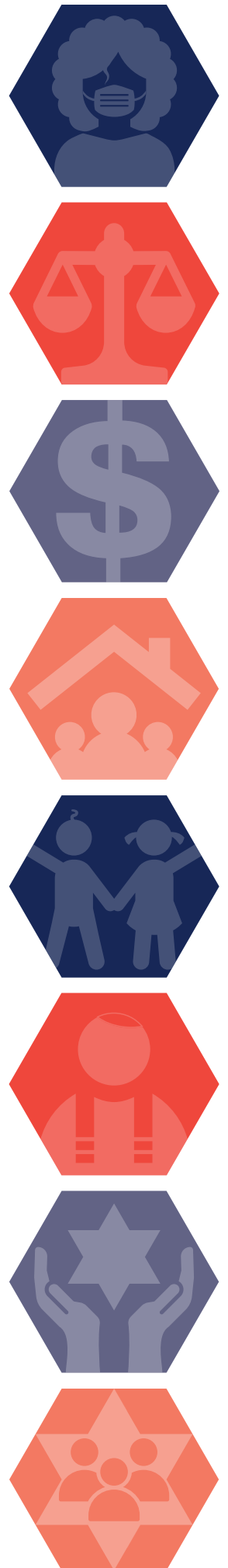
Survivors' healing and independence depends on the Jewish community's capacity and willingness to meet both their short and long-term needs through new collaborations, partnerships, and funding.

FULL REPORT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE in the JEWISH COMMUNITY

Raising Awareness
and Understanding

A NATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Background

Jewish Women International (JWI) conducted a needs assessment of the domestic violence programs serving the Jewish community in order to activate and educate Jewish communal leadership on the needs of domestic violence survivors in the era of COVID-19, to culminate in new collaborations and funding streams to meet those needs. JWI also provided forums for the providers to share and learn, as well as trainings, and a clearinghouse of resources to increase their ability to provide trauma-informed services to their clients.

JWI used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data. JWI interviewed survivors, Jewish clergy, staff at domestic violence programs serving the Jewish community, and attorneys who handle domestic violence cases to develop a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of survivors and of the programs who serve them. We also conducted a survey of both Jewish clergy and domestic violence programs serving the Jewish community to reach a broad swath of individuals and get baseline data. This report is the culmination of this work and provides recommendations for new work, new collaborations and partnerships, and new funding priorities to ensure that Jewish survivors can safely remain and thrive in their community.

This project was developed and overseen by Deborah Rosenbloom, J.D./M.P.A., JWI's chief program officer, who recognized the need for this work, Dorian Karp, M.P.A., JWI's director of advocacy and policy, who represents JWI on the Steering Committee of the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, and Roberta "Rob" Valente, J.D., whose long career in this field includes being the founding

director of the ABA's Commission on Domestic Violence, serving as General Counsel to the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), the chief officer for government affairs for the National Domestic Violence Hotline, and the assistant director of the Family Violence Department of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and attorney advisor for the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. Together they conceptualized the project, developed the research tools, led the initiative, analyzed the data and wrote this report.

Additionally, JWI created an advisory committee of professionals with diverse expertise, experiences, and geographic locations to help determine what information needed to be gathered design the surveys, assist with outreach and review the findings. Rabbi David Rosenberg conducted the follow-up clergy interviews and wrote a draft report of the clergy findings.

The advisory committee consisted of: Susie Feldman, director of philanthropy and corporate relations at Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit; Shoshana Frydman, Ph.D., LCSW, executive director of the Shalom Task Force, New York; Danielle Hartman, president & CEO, Ruth & Norman Rales Jewish Family Services, Boca Raton; Darcy Hirsh, J.D., the Washington representative for the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies; Rabbi David M. Rosenberg, co-chair of JWI's Clergy Task Force on Domestic Abuse in the Jewish Community and coordinator of Jewish educational services at JCFS Chicago; and Naomi Tucker, founder and executive director of Shalom Bayit, Bay Area.

Methodology

Findings for the Needs Assessment were obtained through two surveys. The first survey was designed to assess the experiences of the Jewish domestic violence programs in serving survivors. The second was intended for Jewish clergy to learn about their experiences. These surveys were disseminated in a variety of ways. The survey targeting direct service providers was emailed to JWI's database of organizations, announced in eJewish Philanthropy, and sent through the Network of Jewish Service Agencies which also promoted the efforts via a webinar for their membership. The survey for clergy was announced in a second article in eJewish Philanthropy, shared on social media, and promoted during a webinar training on domestic abuse led by JWI's Clergy Task Force on Domestic Abuse in the Jewish Community (CTF). Forty-one domestic violence programs and thirty-five clergy responded to the surveys.

The surveys were followed by interviews/ focus groups with all the respondents who indicated interest. Thirteen interviews/ focus groups were held during which researchers spoke to twenty-two advocates representing Jewish domestic violence programs in sixteen cities across the country; nine interviews with clergy were led by the co-chair of JWI's CTF; and five survivors shared their experiences with the researchers. Additionally, as part of this project JWI launched and continues to offer monthly peer-to-peer support forums for domestic violence providers working in the Jewish community and gleaned greater insights into their work through those forums.

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

"There's just a lack of knowledge as to what does it mean if you're working full-time and you have no access to your money – that that's financial abuse, and it's a part of domestic violence. But I don't think that people really know that because, well, he didn't give me a black eye. He didn't even rape me. He just is the one who takes care of all the money and that's okay. Mostly, except for when he yells at me that I spend too much and I have no access to seeing what we actually have."

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"*Get* denial is about power and control. Batterers go for the thing that will get them the most power. And by refusing to give a *get*, he controls her future."

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

"That week I found out I was pregnant. And then the following week, I went out to get bagels on a Sunday morning, and got a flat tire and was gone much longer than anticipated. And when I came back, I knocked on the door 'cause I had bagels and cream cheese and the dog. And he came down and he answered the door and he punched me in the nose and I started bleeding and I had no clue where this came from, what caused it, what generated such a violent response to having a flat tire and being late with the bagels. So I was scared, but I would never say anything to anyone."

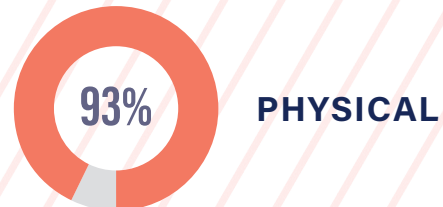
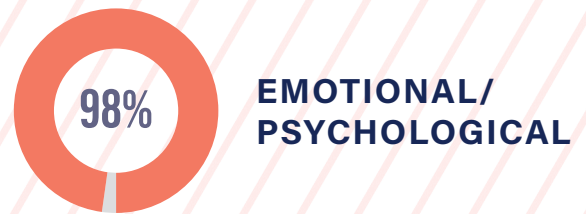
What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic abuse has no boundaries; it affects all types of relationships, and cuts across all racial, ethnic and socio-economic lines. Domestic violence is defined by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence as “the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another.”

Jewish survivors of domestic violence experience the same forms of violence as non-Jewish domestic violence survivors, as well as additional forms of violence unique to Jewish families. The most common forms of violence found in our survey correspond with the most common forms of domestic violence found in the general population — emotional/psychological abuse (98%), physical abuse (93%), financial abuse (93%), conflict around custody (88%), isolation or ostracization (84%), and sexual violence (84%). Notably, eighty-one percent of the domestic violence providers surveyed indicated that withholding of a ‘get’ was a form of abuse they see in their work. This finding indicates that “get abuse” is a significant and unique form of domestic violence experienced in the Jewish community. The complexities of domestic violence are not always understood, in particular that both withholding money and withholding a ‘get’ are forms of domestic violence in which the abuser maintains control over the victim.

While there are no reliable estimates of the incidence or prevalence of domestic abuse in the Jewish community, clinical and other data support the assertion that domestic abuse is a significant and under-recognized issue that impacts Jewish homes and families.

TYPES OF ABUSE *reported by respondents*





**BARRIERS
TO ESCAPING
VIOLENCE**

reported by respondents

According to the survey findings, Jewish survivors of domestic violence experience many barriers when trying to address the violence they are experiencing. The top barriers found in this report are a lack of financial resources (98%), concerns about child custody (93%) and fear of leaving the relationship (93%). Additional barriers survivors also experienced included family pressure to stay with the partner (86%), a desire to stay in the relationship (86%), feelings of embarrassment or guilt (*shonda*) (77%), and a lack of support from clergy (72%).

While lack of support from clergy was identified in survey findings, the insights from rabbis in the studies were encouraging and indicate progress is being made around how rabbis address and confront domestic abuse issues that come to their attention, continued support and education for rabbis is still needed. As important leaders in the Jewish community, rabbis are vital in the fight to end domestic abuse and can serve as supporters and counselors not only for the victims and survivors of abuse but also for

the abuser and other family members. Victims and survivors are far more likely to seek help from their rabbi if he/she has previously spoken out about domestic abuse. Rabbis can also play a pivotal role in both early intervention and long-term healing.

Funds and options must be identified to support the longer-term needs of abused women and their children including housing, financial support, and legal resources.

The pandemic has created heightened risks for women and families as stay-at-home orders, unemployment, financial hardship, and trauma correlate with an increase of gender-based violence. This moment in time when each of us is experiencing the isolation that a victim lives in every day is a unique opportunity to drive the field forward with new understandings about the dynamics and impacts of domestic abuse; legislation that supports the needs of survivors and the advocates who serve them; and a commitment to prioritize the needs of Jewish families experiencing domestic violence.

Stages of Change

The goal of Jewish domestic violence victim services programs, like secular domestic violence programs, is to meet the needs of survivors wherever they are on their journey. Each survivor has a different set of needs, but the needs Jewish domestic violence victim services programs most often meet include shelter, safety planning, counseling for themselves and their children, helping survivors to understand what they are experiencing, offering them options for responding to abuse, validating their feelings about abuse, and ensuring that they have access to the cultural and spiritual supports that can help them find healing and safety.

Is this list comprehensive enough? Is there anything survivors are asking for that is missing? We cannot determine what survivors need unless we listen carefully to what they say. All too frequently, we offer survivors what we have in the way of resources — not what they actually ask for. Most seasoned advocates know that many of their clients say in their first intake interview that they “just want the violence to stop.” Yet we don’t have resources that directly address that request. The tools we most often use when hearing that phrase is to offer the survivor space in a shelter or to get a protection order requiring the abuser to leave the family home. Those are the tools we have at hand, the tools that funders are comfortable supporting.

But what if the survivors are not comfortable with those tools? What if a survivor who says they “just want the violence to stop” really means they want us to provide counseling to the abuser or they want the Jewish community to hold the abuser accountable or keep the survivor and her children safely within the community? How can we really understand what Jewish survivors define as their specific needs? How do we know that a tool or resource we have offered to a survivor is the appropriate one at the time it is offered.

We need to look more closely to determine what survivors’ unmet needs are. That requires listening to the survivor closely and carefully and checking with the survivor to be sure that we truly understand their needs. For this report, we spoke to survivors and advocates to identify what programs currently offer – and to find out what survivors’ unmet needs are.

Understanding Stages of Change

Over and over in our key informant interviews, we heard both victim advocates and Jewish domestic violence survivors say something similar and telling. *Survivors do not know at first what is happening to them.* They may think that their marriages or relationships are troubled. Survivors often blame themselves at first, believing that they are somehow responsible for preventing their partners' abuse — by making sure the house is always clean, the

children are always quiet, the meals are always ready on time, and by suppressing their own needs and own anger to avoid triggering the anger of their abusive partner. They do not immediately understand that they are experiencing abuse, even though they know something is wrong.

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"One of the things I find very, very strong in the Jewish community, especially in the Orthodox community, is the assumption that DV is physical violence. And if there's no evidence of a black eye, it isn't violence — everything's fine, go home and be a better wife, and he'll change."

The interviewees told us that it took some time for survivors to reach out for help. And even when they reached out for help, they were not necessarily ready to make a change. Some survivors left abusive relationships and returned to them, sometimes multiple times.

There is an explanation for these survivors' actions and choices. Psychologists have long recognized that making the move from hurtful or unhealthy situations is neither a sudden process nor a simple one. Psychologists identify four "stages of change" that persons in hurtful or unhealthy situations move through to achieve safety and stability.

JEWISH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS OFFER:

emergency services

(shelter or shelter referral, safety planning, court accompaniment, transportation, hotline/helpline)

direct services

(help obtaining public benefits, counseling, legal assistance, financial assistance)

other services

(referrals and outsourcing, community outreach and education, training for clergy, and youth prevention and education)

JEWISH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS SERVE SURVIVORS:

- across denominations
- of all genders and sexual orientations
- who are not fluent in English
- with disabilities
- of all ages
- of all incomes and socio-economic statuses

Stage 1: Pre-Contemplation

This is the stage where the survivor is trying to understand: *“What is happening to me?”* At this stage, a survivor may not even be reaching out for help, because the survivor is still working out whether their partner’s behavior is unintentional or actually abusive. This is a time when survivors may reach out to particular friends and family to understand what is happening. Sometimes those confidantes then suggest that survivors reach out to confidential hotlines — such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline — to tell their stories and find help in identifying the problem. Once the survivor is able to name what is happening — *“This is domestic violence. This is something my partner is intentionally doing to me.”* — they are able to move to the next stage of change.

This is where rabbis have a very important role to play. Key informants told us that rabbis were sometimes the first person in the Jewish community that the survivor reached out to for help. This was especially likely if the rabbi had already given a sermon addressing domestic violence, which signaled to survivors that the rabbi both understood what they were experiencing and wanted to help. But other key informants told us that rabbis who had not had appropriate training about domestic violence often dismissed the concerns of the survivor, because the rabbi was unable to identify “red flags” that indicated domestic violence.

The rabbi’s most effective role at this stage is to connect the survivor with appropriate services.



Stage 2: Contemplation

This is the information-gathering stage of dealing with abuse in their lives. Whether the survivor reaches out to a friend for more information about domestic violence or utilizes services such as national hotlines or local program helplines or websites offering information on domestic violence, the survivor is in a stage of exploration and self-education. The survivor is learning what the signs of domestic violence are, what kinds of actions abusers take to control their intimate partners, what the impact of domestic violence is on the survivor and the children and, most importantly, that domestic violence is not the fault of the survivor.

As many of our key informants told us, this is often the first time that survivors can see all of the actions of the abuser in context. For example, their abusive partner may have hit them once (which they understand to be domestic violence), but the abuser's subsequent use of financial or economic control (limiting the money the survivor has to spend on the family, taking the survivor's paycheck away, even making it impossible for the survivor to get a job) comes into focus as abuse for the first time. At the same time, the survivor is learning about resources to respond to the abuse: safety planning; getting a protection order; what resources are available to help the survivor move into independent housing; and how to find the financial independence the survivor needs to sever the abuser's control. At this point, a survivor is beginning to see what a future without violence looks like. The survivor also realizes that there are resources available and begins to think about which ones to utilize. This is another place where rabbis can step up and make referrals to local domestic violence programs, though in too many cases they don't do so, because of a lack of training and a lack of knowledge about local resources.



Stage 3: Action

Before this time, a survivor is not yet ready to leave or take serious action that signals to the abuser that the survivor will no longer endure the abuse. This is a time when survivors will reach out to domestic violence programs to find one that can give them the help they need. At this point, it is critical that domestic violence programs are prepared to meet the needs that survivors have begun to identify in the contemplation stage.

Each survivor has a different set of needs and expectations, but programs tend to have a fixed array of resources (many of which are determined by the funders' willingness to provide funding to support specific services). We know from our victim advocate surveys that the top needs they see for survivors are financial assistance, housing, legal assistance, and counseling and/or peer support.

Funding often goes directly towards emergency and short-term needs; shelter; legal accompaniment to get a protection order; limited cash assistance to help a survivor with transportation; and help applying for public benefits. A survivor reaching out to a program can quickly be drawn into action by using these specific resources, because they are available. These resources can help a survivor gain independence over time.



Stage 4: Long-Term Healing and Independence

This is an important stage, the one in which we can see the survivor successfully heal and find a new and more peaceful life. Yet long-term healing and independence can be hard for survivors, because the typical resources that a mainstream domestic violence program offers are missing some of the long-term tools that a survivor needs: a safe place to set up a permanent home; a job that pays enough to support the survivor and her children; legal assistance with more complex legal needs like divorce and child custody and obtaining a 'get' (religious divorce); and restoring their place in the Jewish community. And this is where the Jewish community can really make a difference. The Jewish community must become strong advocates for funding for these long-term healing and independence resources.

Society may blame survivors for leaving and going back all the time, but that is not their fault. It points to a lack of funding for services that promote their long-term well-being. Instead of blaming survivors, we should acknowledge that we failed to provide those services.

The Jewish community can support survivors' long-term healing and independence. To successfully leave abusive relationships, survivors need to be connected with their Jewish community as much as they need housing, financial assistance, legal assistance and counseling. Key informants told us how important it was for survivors to be able to bring their Jewish faith and rituals with them in their journey to a life free from abuse. They also told us how important the Jewish community was to survivors and how hard it was for survivors to have to leave their communities in order to be able to escape abuse. Key informants told us that those survivors who were able to go to programs centered in Jewish cultural and spiritual practices believed it was critically important it was for their healing to have that continuity of faith and ritual. This is a critical time where the rabbi can connect the Jewish community in a supportive way with the survivor, focusing on keeping the family safe rather than "taking sides."

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"The woman comes and goes an average of seven times. So I say that it's part of a process: You work, she leaves, you think, 'yay.' And then she goes back, but she's a little bit stronger this time when she goes back, if she leaves she'll be a little bit more ready, and it may take her a lot of times going back and forth. And it's so hard to be patient."



The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Domestic Violence Programs and Survivors

General Trends

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit everyone hard, but it has impacted survivors of domestic violence and the victim advocates who serve them particularly hard. One of the most dangerous places for survivors of domestic violence is the home, where most domestic violence takes place. Under stay-at-home orders, survivors find themselves quarantined with their abusers. And when it is difficult, if not impossible, to engage with others outside of the home, survivors have fewer means to escape an abusive relationship. For survivors with children, the dangers of pandemic lockdown are multiplied. Programs reported that survivors continued to reach out for help even during the pandemic. Some programs reported an increase in survivors reaching out, while other programs reported that the number of survivors reaching out for help had dropped because many were unable to reach out while they were locked down with the abuser.

Survivors and victim advocates report that the pandemic's jolt to the economy exacerbates the level of abuse in the home. The abuser may have lost a job and, as a result, no longer leaves the home. A survivor may have lost her job and therefore has lost both the ability to leave home and her financial independence. If the survivor is able to work from home, the abuser may try to sabotage her ability to work by denying her access to a computer or phone or by creating disruptions that threaten the survivor's continued employment. The responsibility of taking care of children and their schooling are additional stressors. All of which strain a fragile environment, making it more likely the abuser will escalate his emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse.

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"Whole families at home together for this long period of time without daily or even weekly breaks is extremely challenging to relationships already experiencing high conflict and relationships where one partner's behaviors are abusive."

“Many of our clients are struggling to find and maintain employment. COVID-19 made this much worse and survivors who often get little or no child support are struggling to provide for their families.”

Victim advocates across the country report that abusers have become adept at converting the lockdown and its related issues into tools for gaslighting, harassing, or threatening their intimate partners. Abusers may refuse to use PPE at work and/or refuse to wash their hands or keep their distance in order to expose their intimate partner to COVID. Victim advocates also report that other abusers gaslight their intimate partners, accusing them of trying to contaminate the family when the survivors go out to work or to shop for food or other necessary supplies. Some abusers threaten to cancel or cut the survivor and children off from health insurance coverage. And at a time when almost all transactions in stores and online are done electronically to avoid touching money, the abuser may suddenly cut the survivor’s access to a credit or debit card.

Researcher Jackie Campbell, of Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, has noted several factors related to the COVID lockdown that are likely to exacerbate an abuser’s acts of domestic violence: using the lockdown to further control the movements of an intimate partner; financial stress due to furloughs or layoffs; the loss of “escape valves” like work or school outside of the home; isolation from family and friends; the triggering of existing PTSD; and alcohol or drug use/abuse¹.

¹ Campbell, Jackie. “Coronavirus and Domestic Violence: What You Should Know.” Johns Hopkins Medicine, July 6, 2020.

Survey Results

The victim advocates we spoke with were very concerned about their clients remaining in lockdown with their abusers. They reported increases in the incidents of physical abuse survivors were experiencing. The victim advocates also noted that the pandemic lockdown was making critical issues worse: "Clients [are] reporting too much time in isolation leading to additional mental health issues, women who had jobs now have lost them and having to start over again." One victim advocate poignantly articulated the dilemma the survivors she worked with faced: "When it comes to COVID . . . it's hard to hear women say: 'I don't know which I'm more afraid of — my husband or getting COVID! So many women have said, 'I don't know whether I should leave or not.'" Other victim advocates noted with concern that a lot of their clients were returning to live with their abusers, because the extraordinary burdens of the pandemic made it too hard to continue their independent lives. Yet taking clients into shelter was also difficult, not only because of the constant cleaning and sanitizing needed to keep everyone safe, but how all services suffered from shortages in staffing.

There were also concerns about breakdowns in survivors accessing critical public benefits, such as subsidized housing and food stamps, because many of the offices where survivors would go to apply for services were closed. Having the benefits application process move to a completely online environment further complicated matters due to the complexity of the forms, survivors' lack of digital literacy, and survivors' lack of access to needed technology.



85%

Eighty-five percent of survey respondents indicated that Jewish domestic violence programs have found it more complicated to meet survivors' needs since COVID-19, citing technology, internet access, and digital literacy as barriers unique to the pandemic era.



76%

Seventy-six percent of providers indicated concern over confidentiality or survivors' safety in using technology.



73%

Seventy-three percent of providers reported an increase in reports of trauma and/or abuse in the home.

The most common challenges survivors are experiencing as a result of COVID are **access to internet, the lack of justice system services, limited privacy or separation at home, and loss of income or unemployment.**

A number of programs also indicated that **access to attorneys and limited digital literacy** have been challenges during COVID-19. Two programs also report they are hearing that **abusers are finding new ways to abuse** including “not allowing children to spend time with their parent who is a health care provider” or “the abuser not respecting safe practices such as social distancing and mask-wearing” and “lots of gaslighting.”

The Work of Victim Advocates During COVID-19

Some of the work and social changes imposed by the pandemic on victim advocates have been, surprisingly, a mixed blessing. Most of the victim advocates we spoke to and/or who responded to our survey brought up technology as an example of that complex response to the pandemic. Once the quarantines and stay-at-home orders began during the pandemic, domestic violence programs, like the rest of society, turned quickly to phone and internet technologies to continue its work with survivors. The use of technology has been helpful but also poses risks to confidentiality and has created additional barriers for some survivors seeking services.

Victim advocates we surveyed and spoke with noted the increased importance of having up-to-date information on their websites for survivors. One advocate, noting a five-fold increase in unique website visitors during COVID, said there is a need for “a revamped website with increased access to legal and psycho-educational information and resources.” The use of Zoom and other video communications technologies have completely changed the way domestic violence survivors obtain services and help. Telehealth counseling and peer support groups have replaced in-person meetings. This increased use of technology has made access to counseling and other resources much easier for many survivors. Victim advocates report that many survivors more regularly participate in counseling, case management and court-related activities because the stresses of transportation and childcare have disappeared. All of the victim advocates we interviewed said that the use of technology to offer counseling, case management and court-related services was so beneficial that they believed their programs and the courts would continue to offer electronic communications and services even after the pandemic ended.

**AN ADVOCATE
SPEAKS:**

"Tech needs have skyrocketed. Each staff member, including clinicians, attorneys, and victim advocates, needs a laptop and cell phone, with service and wifi and a Telehealth account. Educators have no access to teens and young adults, so we are looking for new software to work with them virtually."

Yet the victim advocates we surveyed and spoke with also reported that technology has had its downside for them during the pandemic. Some advocates noted that the ease of scheduling counseling and case management sessions with survivors has resulted in back-to-back sessions over the course of an entire day, with little or no time in-between to carry out necessary paperwork and debriefing activities. This has led to counseling and Zoom "fatigue" for victim advocates. Victim advocates also noted that this scheduling and the use of remote technologies reduce the spontaneous access they formerly had to supervisors and colleagues, so that the victim advocates had less time to consult about difficulties that arose throughout the workday. Programs reported challenges ensuring that victim advocates were able to engage in self-care, especially because boundary setting becomes all the more difficult when victim advocates work from home.

The victim advocates we surveyed and spoke with reported using texting more often now than speaking on the phone when communicating with survivors. The use this and similar technology also raised confidentiality concerns among victim advocates, especially when con-

sidering that these technologies are not designed to protect data. Text messages remain accessible on the survivors' phones, where the abuser may see them. Text messages are also subject to subpoena or discovery in court cases. Yet texting is a common technology that most survivors have access to and is an easy way for survivors to communicate quietly if the abuser is nearby. Telehealth services offer more protection around confidentiality, but they require access to a computer or smartphone, which the abuser may monitor. Victim advocates report that many Orthodox women do not have access to either computers or smartphones and may not have ever learned how to use them.

Victim advocates continually noted with great concern in interviews that they lost touch with many of the Orthodox women they served, because of the survivors' lack of access to technology during the lockdown.

Technology has been a mixed blessing for victim advocates in terms of remaining in contact with their communities. Some victim advocates reported that Zoom meetings made it much easier to bring together community or interagency task force members; in the past, it was more difficult to schedule everyone for in-person meetings.

**AN ADVOCATE
SPEAKS:**

"Abusers with children are taking advantage of the courts not working 100% to stop paying child support and alimony, breaking the parenting plan."

Yet other victim advocates noted that it was much harder to do outreach in their communities and inhibited their efforts to build new relationships with other community organizations. One victim advocate lamented that the COVID lockdown led to an “interruption of ‘word of mouth’ — which is how the majority of our clients come to our program.” In particular, victim advocates expressed disappointment in their ability to develop new or budding relationships with Jewish congregations who could be valuable partners in their work.

In states where the government has declared a state of emergency, these costs are currently approved by health insurance companies. But victim advocates expressed great concern about how these costs would be covered once the state of emergency would be lifted. One victim advocate told us, “A lot of the therapists who are getting paid are really concerned about that. So, we’re trying to figure out how to collect funds for that specific reason.”

Technology, especially apps and software that provide privacy protections, are costly. Most require subscriptions that add significantly to the cost of providing services, as well as increased investment in hardware.

Many courts across the country are now issuing protection orders and conducting other civil cases, such as divorce and child custody cases, via video technologies because of COVID concerns. The victim advocates we spoke to noted that despite the use of these technologies, the court’s caseloads are terribly backed up.

Another victim advocate noted that survivors’ access to attorneys was more limited during the pandemic, with more survivors participating in online court hearing pro se, while struggling with unfamiliar videoconferencing technology

Difficult to access under COVID:

advocacy, therapy,



and other victims’ services



secure devices,

apps, and software



legal counsel and

timely justice





The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Domestic Violence Programs and Survivors

KEY FINDINGS

Covid-19 is having a profound impact on the safety of survivors. Direct service delivery is being recalibrated to address the current emergency and overcome the lack of in-person service delivery. Hybrid services rely on telehealth technology. Access to phones, tablets, computers, internet access, and all means of confidential communication are critical.

External systems that were critical to survivors' safety and independence have been closed down or severely limited during the pandemic.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Increased funding needs to be provided to the programs in order for them to continue delivering hybrid models of service (remote and in-person) developed during the pandemic.

Funding for technology and confidentiality resources are particularly important to protect the safety of survivors.

Training and best practices for using technology to address survivors' needs are critical.

Unmet Needs





Legal Needs

Legal assistance — access to low-cost or no-cost help from attorneys and legal accompaniment and support from victim advocates — can improve survivors' safety and help them establish financial independence. It can also help them obtain safety protections and secure housing options for themselves and their children. Survivors' lack of access to trained, trauma-informed legal representatives is all too often the reason why survivors return to abusers.

When we asked victim advocates, in the survey and in interviews, what were survivors' top needs, legal representation and legal assistance came in as one of the top three. Many programs did not have an attorney on staff — or even an attorney on contract — to help survivors of domestic violence. The victim advocates all cited the high cost of quality legal representation as a major barrier to survivors being able to escape an abusive relationship safely with their children.

Attorneys working with Jewish domestic violence survivors quickly made it clear that the cost of legal representation was due to the years it takes to deal comprehensively with all the legal issues that arise for survivors. The attorneys noted that abusers often engaged in protracted litigation in order to wear survivors down and to drain their financial resources. Yet, they also noted that the legal process itself was overwhelming and traumatizing for survivors.

While it may seem like survivors who seek legal help must have reached the action stage in their personal journey through the stages of change, the attorneys we spoke with made it clear that survivors were unfamiliar with, unprepared for, and frightened by the legal process. At the same time, survivors had to open up about their stories with their attorneys. The privileged communications that attorneys have with their clients allows survivors to share important details that they might be afraid to share in non-confidential conversations.

One attorney told us:

“An average case would take four to seven years. I’ve had cases that have taken nine years. There are between six months and up to two years of us continually giving extensive advice and counsel before we even file a case. And then once you file, there are a lot of issues to unravel if the abuse occurred in the Jewish community.”

Another attorney confirmed that the pre-filing period could take a lot of time:

“We often have to speak with a survivor for a considerable amount of time before they even make the decision to leave. A big component of this is doing the safety planning and informing them of their legal rights.”

As one attorney noted:

“Funding legal advocacy is funding survivors, because that’s who the survivors are talking to and trusting with their stories.”

With so much to learn and absorb about how the justice system works (or not), survivors often re-set themselves back to the contemplation stage. The contemplation stage for a survivor engaging with the legal system is an extended effort to learn about complex legal rights and options, as well as potential unintended consequences. It is a daunting process for survivors, one that takes a long time, even with the expert assistance of attorneys familiar with the dynamics of domestic violence. And taking a long time to understand and become more comfortable with the intricacies of the legal process takes a lot of costly attorney time. But it is essential time that helps to ensure that survivors make the best and safest choices as they legally separate from their abusive partners.

Legal assistance also takes years because it is not limited to obtaining protection orders for survivors. From the very beginning, attorneys must engage in long-term safety planning with the survivor, which help the attorney identify legal remedies that the survivor needs to keep herself and her children safe.

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

“The majority of our clients can’t afford their own lawyers. Only really high net worth women can afford a lawyer for their domestic violence divorce — it costs about \$100,000. And then on the low end, there are folks who qualify for Legal Aid, and in between is everybody else. For the women who are still married to their abuser, the fact that they are married makes it so they don’t qualify for Legal Aid — even if they have no access to that money. And, if you have a really complicated case, the lawyers just don’t take those cases. So you have a lot of people who are stuck.”

A SERVICE PROVIDER SPEAKS:

“The problem is really the civil legal services. It’s the divorce process and the high price of attorneys. And these abusers, a lot of them are, you know, wealthy, powerful men, they get expensive lawyers. And it’s just, the abuse continues through the divorce process. Divorces are years and then post decree, they don’t go by what was agreed upon and they’re back in court and our clients end up very often not with the best outcome, it’s very hard.”

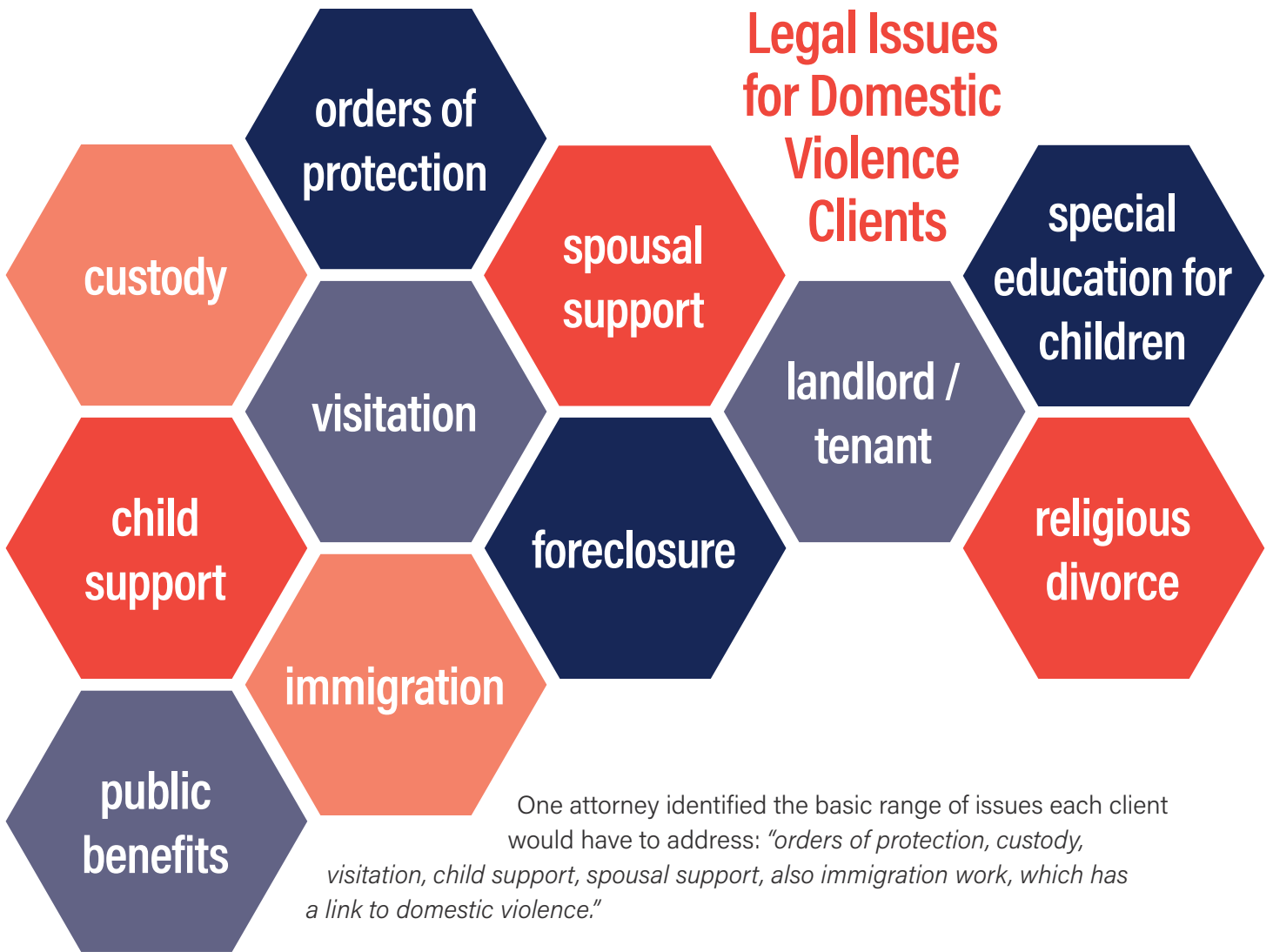
A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

“If it wasn’t for the head of the domestic violence program herself calling an attorney who took on my case because of that connection, I would have been really on my own and not gotten full custody. I’d say that one thing that really shifted my story and my progress and getting out of the situation I was in was having a lawyer who really understood domestic violence and what my child needed. And the perpetrator had a lot of resources and flew across the country to terrorize us in court — it went on for many, many years. My lawyer advocated for the court to grant me full custody because of the trauma my child had experienced. A lot of survivors go to court and the counselors from the domestic violence program aren’t lawyers and can’t really help them say what they need to say to the judge. And often what that results in is shared custody. ‘Cause sometimes you truly don’t know what it is you’re fighting for and how to make that argument, especially when you’re in such a trauma state of mind. Having an attorney made all the difference in the world.”

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

“Our model is a limited representation model, providing about 20 hours of legal services and then extending those services on a case-by-case basis, depending on funding. Some clients may have 90 hours, while others have 20 hours.”

Legal Issues for Domestic Violence Clients



One attorney identified the basic range of issues each client would have to address: *“orders of protection, custody, visitation, child support, spousal support, also immigration work, which has a link to domestic violence.”*

Other legal professionals also identified a host of broader — but equally critical — specialized legal issues that staff attorneys could not address and that had to be farmed out to other legal experts: *“public benefits, foreclosure landlord tenant, and special education needs for children.”* And as one staff attorney noted: *“We do education and advocacy work in the community as well.”* Additionally, for survivors whose husbands refuse to give a ‘get’ one of the legal advocacy groups provides information and advice on navigating the differences between the rabbinical courts and the civil courts, often partnering with the Organization for the Resolution of Agunot (ORA) to *‘provide assistance with getting their religious divorce.’*

As one attorney said: “What really breaks our hearts is when a client feels that their children are in danger when going to stay with the abuser, but they don’t have representation; they don’t have access to a forensic psychologist. It puts them in a really bad situation in which our hands are completely tied. There’s nothing we can do about it.”

One attorney told us how difficult it is for survivors to pay for private legal representation: "Even if they can afford a lawyer to a point, they have to pay a \$10,000 retainer. So the survivors scrape and they borrow and they get the \$10,000 together somehow, by the grace of God, and they give it over to the lawyer. And then the abuser is constantly filing in court and the retainer gets used up, and the survivor says, 'I don't have another \$5,000. I gave you everything I had — now what am I supposed to do?' It's a big problem."

In addition to the cost of hiring an attorney, survivors face other daunting legal costs, especially in child custody cases where the court requires costs like filing fees, fees for obtaining court transcripts, and evaluations by psychological experts. All of these factors add up to a long-term but crucial process that is never fully funded — and wildly out of reach in terms of costs for survivors seeking private legal representation. This forces the programs to "ration" clients' access to legal services.

The program directors and attorneys we spoke with all told us of their difficulties in finding grants or donations that would fund quality legal representation through their programs. From these interviews, we learned that grantors and philanthropists were unable to commit enough money to ensure that these long-term services were available to survivors. In one case, a victim advocate gratefully told us of the unexpected generosity of a private donor. Yet, we learned that the total donation was \$20,000 — not even enough to cover the costs of protection order cases for the programs' clients.

Unfortunately for most survivors of domestic violence, free or low-cost legal representation is nearly impossible to find. That is equally true for Jewish survivors of domestic violence. Even

for survivors who can afford to pay a private attorney a retainer of \$10,000 to \$15,000 to start the process of obtaining a protection order, a divorce, child custody and support, and other related matters, the protracted litigation inflicted on the survivor as retaliation by a vengeful abuser can easily exhaust that retainer, requiring the survivor to find even more money for legal representation — if that is even possible for the survivor.

One legal program in New York noted that some of their clients came to them to ask for help paying \$90,000 to \$100,000 legal bills that had mounted up over the years.

And too many private family law attorneys have not had trauma-informed domestic violence training, so they may inadvertently cause greater harm to survivors by pressing them to "work with" the abuser or share custody in spite of dangers to the children. As a result, the survivor is further disadvantaged and traumatized by inappropriate legal advice.

*Another attorney reported:
"Some of those lawyers are not trained in domestic violence safety and trauma issues. They tell the survivor, "You have to go into mediation. Just do it."*

“The legal system is a grinder. It can be very unpredictable and unpleasant for the survivor, of course, but you also have extremely bright and committed young attorneys who sometimes take those bumps on their own shoulders and feel like, ‘I should be protecting this person more effectively from these Kafkaesque courts.’ The survivor is rightly looking to the attorney for answers and help and explanation of what’s happening. The attorney may have less experience understanding how secondary trauma might be triggering for the survivors. And attorneys are also experiencing their own new kind of trauma from doing the work. Going through that with the survivor, and also being professionally isolated, increases risk for burnout.”

“I feel like a failure all the time, even though I know it’s the system’s failure. But we’re working as hard as we can. We need comprehensive, holistic legal services that are fully funded. We need grantors to count our work by the number of contacts we have with each client, not just by the number of clients. These cases go on for years and each client has hundreds of interactions with their attorneys. Although we now have VOCA to fund some legal assistance, it doesn’t fund enough. Comprehensive, long-term legal assistance is needed, especially for marginalized communities within Jewish communities.”

“They’re so overworked that they can’t take on complex cases. So, if you have a straight up restraining order or a straight up divorce, no house, no kids fine. But a lot of people with really complicated things, like an international child custody case, are stuck without legal representation.”

Another concern raised by some of the attorneys with greater experience working with survivors of domestic violence is the constant turnover of legal staff in legal aid and domestic violence victim advocacy programs. They noted that most programs cannot afford to pay much for legal assistance, so most of the attorneys who end up working for their programs are, as one attorney said, “newly hatched,” with no experience in the legal system at all. These new attorneys are thrown into the litigation mill without even a mentor or supervisor to help guide them.

A Jewish domestic violence program in Boston decided to prioritize having low-cost contract attorneys, as well as a mentoring attorney to guide them:

“We use VOCA funds to pay private attorneys a low fee, \$75 an hour. We have a volunteer mentor, a very experienced family law attorney. So he provides mentoring, which younger, newer attorneys need. Some of the contract attorneys are second career kind of people, but they’re very eager and hungry for that kind of mentoring and support. And we also bring them together once or twice a year and also keep them connected as a small listserv.”

The results of our survey and key informant interviews make it clear that all domestic violence programs can better serve survivors if the programs have, at the least, one staff lawyer who has had appropriate trauma-informed training (and where that lawyer has insufficient experience, has a seasoned domestic violence lawyer as a supervisor or mentor), as well as a legal advocate who can help the lawyer gather information, fill out forms, and provide continuing support to the survivors they serve. The costs associated with having this level of staffing also include private interview rooms (or encrypted communications when using technology) to maintain the attorney-client privilege, malpractice insurance, access to certified language access interpreters, secure cloud storage to maintain the confidentiality of client files, the ability to offer electronic signing of documents when survivors cannot come in person to the legal clinic, funding to subsidize clients’ filing fees in court, access to subscription legal information databases (such as Westlaw or Lexis), and most importantly, the availability of long-term legal representation, particularly in immigration cases and in family law cases involving child custody and support. Another important finding in our key informant interviews was the need to have sufficient legal staff to ensure that no lawyer’s or advocate’s caseload was so high that they were unable to offer more than short-term or emergency relief.

Without all of these resources, attorneys handling domestic violence cases have a difficult time achieving safe and successful outcomes for their clients.

One attorney told us:

"We have a few family attorneys who will do low bono pro bono kind of consults. They talk to a client for 30 minutes and send them on their way. But it's just so hard to find people who have that kind of time."

Another attorney described how limited and inadequate pro bono programs are:

"What happens is the cases are so long and complicated that it might sound like a good idea at the beginning to bring on a pro-bono attorney, but it isn't. So we piecemeal stuff together."

Pro Bono Legal Services are Not the Answer

Few programs can offer this range of legal services and resources, despite the universal recognition in the field that high-quality legal services are critical to survivor safety and independence. Most of the programs we heard from were adamant that pro bono legal representation was not the solution to these needs. Most pro bono lawyers have limited experience in handling domestic violence cases, which makes it difficult for them to pursue protection orders, divorces or other domestic violence-related litigation without a mentoring lawyer available to help with gathering appropriate evidence, submitting forms, petitions, motions, briefs, or other court filings. Additionally, the programs who had tried utilizing pro bono lawyers found that the lawyers were unable to commit sufficient time to provide comprehensive and long-term litigation services.

Even those programs that just used pro bono lawyers for protection order filings found that pro bono lawyers could only commit to helping survivors obtain immediate protective orders; they were not available for enforcement for violations of or modifications to those protection orders.

A great concern about the use of pro bono attorneys that we heard from staff attorneys and victim advocates was that pro bono attorneys lacked trauma-informed training, which could be very damaging to the survivors they helped.

One attorney said:

"People want to volunteer and do pro bono work and help people get a protective order. And that's all lovely, except they're a mergers and acquisitions attorney or a real estate attorney. Whatever they do know, they're not trauma-informed. They have no training, they don't know how the protective order system works, and they can really re-traumatize the client."

Legal Services Programs Cannot Fill the Gap

Some of the key informants we interviewed told us that they had difficulty referring their clients to local Legal Aid programs due to strict intake requirements or long waiting lists.

Legal Services offices are themselves chronically underfunded and one way they manage their limited resources is to conduct simple intake and provide basic information to persons seeking legal help or by helping with only limited legal actions, such as protection orders.

Legal Aid programs also have eligibility requirements that won't allow them to take clients who have assets that put them much above the poverty line. Attorneys told us that, until survivors are divorced from their abusive spouses, the income of the abusive spouse is also factored into determining what the survivor's household income is — and this calculation virtually always puts the survivors' financial situation well above the poverty line, thus making them ineligible for Legal Aid. Yet the survivors do not have access to the income or assets of the abuser, so they cannot afford to retain private attorneys, either, leaving them in the limbo of no legal representation.

One attorney said:

“We have Legal Aid here, and they have a domestic violence program. However, a lot of times my clients don't meet the criteria because if it's not physical violence, it's not counted as abuse. Also, the Legal Aid wait list is always a month, even before the pandemic, just to talk to someone.”

The Need for Coordinated Work in Civil Courts and Religious Tribunals

All of the Jewish domestic violence victim services programs we surveyed noted the importance of helping survivors to obtain a get. The Jewish programs felt an additional, special obligation to assist survivors in both religious and civil contexts. An attorney in a program in New York described this work: “We provide information and advice on navigating the differences between the religious, rabbinical courts and the civil courts. We oftentimes partner with contacts we have in the religious community to provide assistance with getting their religious divorce, the get.” This work requires more than coordinating the timetables of rabbinical and civil courts. These attorneys reported having to be deeply engaged in the Jewish community, to be able to understand and meet their clients’ powerful concerns.

One of these attorneys noted that culturally appropriate legal representation for Jewish survivors extends to enforcing the terms of the get as well as handling violations of the civil court orders.

Raising funding for critical legal services is a major challenge for domestic violence victim services programs, and Jewish-specific domestic violence programs were no exception. Aside from providing shelter housing, legal assistance requires more significant fundraising than any other service provided by a domestic violence program. While a few key informants told us that generous donors provided some funding to pay individual clients’ legal fees, we learned that most survivors could not get financial assistance, nor could the programs find sufficient funding to provide comprehensive legal services for all of their Jewish clients.

Raising funding for legal services for survivors is an important challenge for the Jewish community. Legal assistance is one of the top three unmet needs identified in our survey and in our key informant interviews, and like the other top three unmet needs, is seriously underfunded. We also know that Jewish survivors’ lack of access to comprehensive legal services often results in them having to return to the abuser because of unresolved child custody and support issues, or because family assets remain in the hands of the abuser.

A SERVICE PROVIDER SPEAKS:

“There is community pressure. Orthodox Jewish survivors often come to us with values that arise in their own family and within their community about family unity, like keeping families together. To differing degrees, there’s comfort and lack of comfort and engaging with civil systems versus just rabbinical systems within your community.”



Unmet Legal Needs

KEY FINDINGS

Legal representation addressing the complex issues such as child custody, divorce, and equitable financial distribution is only being provided by a few domestic violence programs and is one of the key gaps. In many cases survivors are left to represent themselves.

While the short-term needs may be met by pro-bono lawyers, the domestic relations issues (divorce, custody, estate issues) take years to unravel and need trauma-informed lawyers with training in the dynamics of domestic violence to represent survivors.

Lawyers who are on staff at domestic violence programs would value peer support, a clearinghouse of legal resources, and mentorship from more experienced lawyers in the domestic violence community.

Legal work in the Jewish community is further complicated by a husband's ability to withhold the *get*, or religious divorce decree, as a means of control over his spouse.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Pro-bono legal services should only be used for short-term legal needs such as protective orders.

All survivors should have access to a trauma-informed domestic violence attorney for all court and legal proceedings.

Increased funding must be provided to enable all Jewish domestic violence programs to hire at least one full-time trauma-informed domestic violence attorney.

Create and maintain peer networks for attorneys working on domestic violence cases to share their challenges, successes, and champion each other.

A clearing house of motions and briefs on typical issues facing domestic violence survivors, particularly around child custody, should be created, managed and maintained.

Attorneys on staff at Jewish domestic violence programs must be trained in navigating rabbinical systems to help clients obtain a *get*.



Economic Security

According to FreeFrom, “It is incredibly expensive to experience domestic violence. This is compounded by the fact that economic abuse occurs in 99% of all instances of intimate partner violence, leaving survivors with little to no income, no access to cash or bank accounts, fraudulent and/or coerced debt in their name, and damaged financial profiles.”²

Without financial resources it is impossible to be independent. Many survivors are challenged in this area due a variety of reasons including: financial abuse severely limiting her access to family resources including their own paycheck, limited work experience and in some cases educational attainment, the costs of being a single parent, and the high cost of living in many Jewish communities. A domestic violence provider writes,

“Most, if not all, of the Jewish clients (currently all women) are without the economic capacity to manage the expenses required to leave their abusers.”

Survivors and victim advocates report that the pandemic’s jolt to the economy exacerbates the level of abuse in the home. With unemployment levels still extraordinarily high, a survivor may have lost her job or found it more difficult to find employment further reducing her financial independence. Employment is key component in survivor’s autonomy.

2 [Survivors Know Best Report, FreeFrom, August 2020](#)

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

"I think a huge part of getting out of the cycle of abuse is empowerment, and giving survivors access to being self-sufficient through job growth and learning. The community should embrace that. It's a very expensive thing to do on your own, but I was brave enough to take out student loans and get grants. But the first thing I was told when I went back to school was, 'Oh, you're Jewish. So your family has money.' So you have this fallacy that being Jewish means you're rich, or you have resources, and it's very far from the truth. Sometimes that might be true, but if those resources come with abuse, why would you want to access them?"

Had I had a mentor, someone from the community, someone that really understood the story, it would have helped steer me in the right direction. And I wouldn't have to figure it out on my own. I know we have such wonderful people in our community. And for me, that was a total disconnect. Only when I was already in graduate school did I learn that you can apply to get a mentor through Jewish Federation. It's not something very open or there's no dialogue around it. At least, not for people who are in a struggle — but it would be so wonderful to hear, 'We are your community, we want to be a part of the journey that helps you not just with your basic needs, but really trying to change the cycle of abuse.'

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"Without a job, survivors are stuck in poverty, often leaving them to go back to their abusers because it's just easier."

One advocate writes that,

“Training and job skills are a real challenge. And going back to work is especially challenging if they haven’t worked for 15 or 20 years.”

Another advocate stated,

“Employment. They need employment. Often they haven’t worked. They often have experienced financial abuse in the sense that they haven’t had control of finances or money.”

We also heard that many survivors wait to leave an abuser until their children get married. For these women, in their 50s and 60s, getting a job is incredibly difficult given their lack of work history, educational attainment, and age discrimination in the workforce.

According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence, “financial abuse is one of the main reasons cited by survivors that they were unable to leave an abusive partner or that they had to return to one. As with all forms of abuse, financial abuse occurs across all socio-economic, educational, and racial and ethnic groups.”³

Economic justice is the cornerstone for safety and viability so women will not return to their abusers. Economic equity and access through sustainable employment and growth opportunities is a gateway to independence, which has too often been denied to women and unimaginable to survivors. Survivors need jobs that allow for flexibility given their unique challenges. In addition, survivors need access to increased access to affordable childcare, transportation, and other services in order to work outside of the home in traditional 9-5 workplaces. One advocate said,

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

“The additional needs that we don’t think about are, for example, if someone’s going to school for training, who is watching their kids, and how are they able to feed their family while they’re getting job training?”

“We have a client right now who quit her job because she spent more money on transportation and childcare than she earned.”

Abusive partners notoriously exploit survivors’ resources to limit their financial and life options. Survivors often subordinate their own health and safety to preserve living standards for themselves and their children. Survivors need long-term financial security and a support system to permanently escape abusive relationships. Therefore, helping survivors create and sustain financial well-being is critical to cultivate an independent life. The most effective way to ensure that women do not feel compelled to return to abusive partners is to ensure their financial security. However, survivors face overwhelming odds: ruined credit scores, inconsistent employment histories, and legal issues caused by abuse making it difficult to gain long-term security

3 <https://nnedv.org/content/about-financial-abuse/>



Economic Security

KEY FINDINGS

To reclaim their independence and self-sufficiency survivors need income that will support themselves and their families.

Financial abuse makes it challenging, if not impossible, for survivors to secure employment, access credit, and obtain housing.

Survivors need jobs that allow for flexibility given their unique challenges.

Survivors need increased access to affordable childcare, transportation, and other services to work outside of the home in traditional 9-5 workplaces.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop a national trauma-informed and victim-centered strengths and asset focused skills training program for both traditional and flexible work environments

Encourage financial institutions to provide support, low interest loans, cash assistance and other services that expand long term economic security.

Connect and mentor survivors as they work to enhance their economic security.

Explore partnerships with Jewish nonprofits addressing food insecurity to make sure that they are providing services to domestic violence survivors.

Develop connections between local Jewish domestic violence providers and membership or tuition-based organizations.

Convene a group of financial experts to explore the creation of a pro-bono financial service for domestic violence survivors.



Housing

Our survey revealed challenges including the cost of housing within the same community, and lack of support offered by it. Particularly in Orthodox families, survivors felt spurned by friends and rather than finding hospitable homes for Shabbat meal invitations and offers for children to play together, these women felt shunned and ashamed of their status as a victim of domestic violence. While the victim wanted to stay in the community, the community did not necessarily welcome her with open arms. And sometimes, even when support is available, it's too dangerous to stay within the area.

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"We had one client who had left her abuser and was staying with family. She got a job, but she lost her job. And the family said, 'You know what? We can't have you staying here anymore. We can't afford it.' She ended up going back to the abuser."

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"I think deciding when it's time to leave is tied to housing, because when our clients are ready to go, they do want to stay in their community. They're not looking for transitional housing. They really don't go to shelters. We work out other things. They want their kids to stay at the same school, to be at the same shul. You know, if they're in the Jewish schools they don't want to move them; where are they going to go?"

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

"'We have no place to go, Mom,' I said. 'I have no clue where I'm going, but it's outta here.' I called Jewish Family Services, but there were no places for me to stay in the community. They had access to one kosher apartment, however it would have been very easy for my husband to follow me and find out where I was. And it was just not a safe, secure spot for us. So I had to find a place to go and I didn't have much time to think."

Emergency Shelter

Safe housing is a critical need for any survivor. While some fleeing survivors may seek immediate refuge with family or friends, others turn to programs for emergency shelter. None of these solutions are satisfactory as the risk to family and friends pose safety concerns, emergency shelters provided by mainstream programs are seen as undesirable, and emergency shelter programs are regulated by government oversight which can have onerous restrictions such as limits placed on length of stay, use of vouchers, and reporting requirements.

Emergency shelter is a critical resource when a survivor is finally ready to take action to leave an abuser. When emergency shelter is not available, all the survivor's investment in learning what is happening to her and what she can do to escape abuse in the pre-contemplation and contemplation stages of change is rendered pointless. If the community does not support her need for emergency housing, it is tantamount to saying, "Why even bother to leave?"

Safe and affordable housing is a universal need that many survivors struggle to obtain. While shelters can fill an emergency need for a limited period of time (typically up to 90 days) most of the programs surveyed do not have their own shelter, and do not want their own shelters, and most survivors do not want to be in shelter. It can be safely said that Jewish women do not go to shelters when alternatives are available, but in emergency situations, shelters can be life-saving.

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"Unfortunately, the government's rules recently changed and a family is only allowed to stay in emergency housing for a very short time. We've gotten them Thursday night, it's 10 o'clock. And to say to a woman that she has to be out before Shabbos is so re-traumatizing. And then they leave angry at us. And it's horrible. I'd like to build relationships with some real estate developers, but not everyone wants to be in the same place. The vouchers are really not a whole lot of money. And to try to be within an Orthodox community with those vouchers is very tricky."

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"The Hebrew shelter homes have been in many sites, but now it is a purchased home in a Jewish neighborhood with no signage whatsoever. It's five bedrooms and two full bathrooms, with 10 beds and a few cribs and pack-n-plays. The makeup of the families that need it determines how it's used. During COVID, we've also been utilizing hotel rooms that have small kitchens in them, and we leased one apartment in the agency's name. We just do our best to figure out how best to serve our clients."

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"We've had an incredible partnership with Airbnb. We were having issues with shelters not taking people, but Airbnb was, so we've had to come up with some creative housing, alternatives, and options."

As one advocate shared:

Emergency shelters are critically important when a survivor calls and says, 'I need to get out of here, right this minute, for my life and my kids.'

The pandemic has further complicated emergency housing for survivors, and programs sought new solutions. Even shelters that may seem ideal in terms of the amount of space and location are not meeting the needs of survivors during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, programs have also been making use of hotel nights, but these are limited and short-term options, and often expensive and can be in dangerous neighborhoods. One advocate shared:

I think hotel stays are really great in the interim while the survivor tries to figure out a plan: Who can I call in my family? Where can I go? Who can give me support?'

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"We work hard to have the shelter itself in the middle of the community, but still be secure. So if survivors are in the shelter for three to six months, they have spent this transitional period of their lives within walking distance of synagogues and a grocery store with a lot of kosher options and two kosher butchers – like they were in the thick of the community. But when the time comes to find long-term housing, survivors need to move out of community to a more affordable area, and it feels isolating."

Transitional Housing

Optimally, survivors and their families would be able to get into transitional housing which provides holistic wrap around services that enable clients to get back on their feet, gain job skills, learn money management, access therapy, and take care of their children in a safe home. Though clients feel it would be helpful to them, few programs are able to provide transitional housing in a secure location that supports survivors for the first two years after they leave their abuser. One of the problems with transitional housing is that it is often supported by government programs and it is challenging to find landlords within the boundaries of Jewish communities who will accept the conditions that come with government funding and oversight.

Additionally, a lack of a strong employment history and poor credit scores are often barriers survivors face in getting approved for transitional and long-term housing.

"Our staff work hard to have the best possible relationship with property managers to find housing for our clients, but the available housing is often located on the periphery or outside of the Jewish community."

Long-Term Housing

The need for help in finding permanent housing for survivors within their communities cannot be overstated. Advocates shared that their clients often want to remain within the community, and not be forced to leave it. As one advocate shared:

“Survivors who don’t need to flee and who can stay in their community are better able to keep their lives normal, keep their job, keep their kids in school. That’s a place of support and a place of stability, providing routine and structure so they don’t have to upend their entire lives. I think this has value.”

Remaining in community when going through difficult times can be a source of help and healing. Children can remain at their schools, friends are nearby, and the upheaval caused by leaving the relationship and home can be mitigated by remaining in community.

But being out on one’s own is expensive, as one long-time advocate shared: “There’s such a lack of understanding of what it takes to be out on your own financially. In Boston, it takes easily \$8,000 to \$10,000 to start up an apartment. There’s so many barriers — if they don’t have their own good credit score and they don’t have history of renting on their own — it’s one of the reasons we see that people delay leaving.”

Many of the programs offer short-term rental assistance. For example, some programs have private funding from Jewish donors set aside for the need of Jewish clients, while other programs often rely on a complicated system of government funding and vouchers for rental assistance. One of the biggest challenges is finding landlords within the area of the Jewish community who are willing to take government vouchers.

Current wisdom and the trend in the domestic violence community is for survivors to remain in their community. But Section 8 housing vouchers are scarce, survivors are often not eligible for rapid re-housing programs, waiting lines are long, and landlords do not offer desirable housing to Section 8 tenants. Federal and state

funds can be helpful in providing housing assistance, but are limited and not every program has access to this money.

Both transitional housing and long-term housing are important steps for a survivor who is moving through the stages of change. These resources represent long-term healing and independence, the culmination of all the work the survivor has done in the pre-contemplation, contemplation, and action stages of escaping domestic violence.

The Jewish community must work together with domestic violence programs to ensure that survivors and their children can find safe and stable long-term housing as they heal from the impacts of abuse and make progress in developing skills and resources to establish new, safe, and independent lives.

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

“When our clients are ready to go, they do want to stay in their community. They want their kids to stay at the same school and to be at the same shul. We have limited funds to help them, like with a deposit for the first month’s rent. But after that we don’t have the funds to help them with what they are looking for.”



Housing

KEY FINDINGS

Survivors want to remain in their community and continue to have access to their synagogues, day schools, and Jewish life.

There is a significant lack of transitional and affordable permanent housing in the Jewish community.

Government subsidized housing is not readily available in many Jewish communities.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Convene Jewish community leaders, real estate investors, and funders to address the lack of transitional and long-term housing for survivors in their community.

Create a funding mechanism that recognizes the impact of financial abuse, most notably how abuse destroys credit and thereby inhibits access to traditional sources of loans and credit, so that survivors can access low interest loans to allow them to rent or buy housing in the Jewish community.

Explore a partnership with Airbnb to help meet the need for transitional and long term housing in communities.

Explore a partnership with Lyft to help with transportation costs of moving.

Community Support





Children

Throughout every interview we conducted — with survivors, victim advocates and domestic violence attorneys — one theme recurred throughout each conversation: How many of survivors' long-term needs really centered around the security and protection of their children from further domestic abuse.

When we asked victim advocates to identify the most significant barriers to a survivor's leaving an abusive partner, they all quickly came back with two words: "The children." They described survivors mired in endless battles about child custody, supervised visitation, and child support. They also told us that survivors did not want to further traumatize their children by taking them out of their schools and communities. Many survivors were unable to leave an abusive home because they could not earn enough money to support themselves and their children, as well as pay for quality childcare. Yet, both survivors and victim advocates also told us that survivors would do anything to protect their children. In fact, survivors and program staff both told us that for many survivors, at the moment that they saw the impact of their

partner's domestic violence on their children, they realized they were ready to take steps to leave the relationship.

Each of the top long-term needs of survivors is closely entwined with the needs of their children. For example, one of the factors that makes long-term legal services so costly is the abuser's protracted use of custody battles to continue to harass and control the survivor. Since many of these battles will only end when the children turn 18, survivors often find that they need a decade or more of legal assistance. Another top need of survivors is stable, affordable housing, preferably in the same school district and — in the case of many Jewish clients — within walking distance of their Jewish communities, so that they can continue raising their children in the Jewish community. The economic resources (emergency cash assistance, assistance paying for car repairs, financial literacy training) identified as a top need by survivors and program staff alike often center around the survivor's need to independently earn enough money to fully take care of herself and her children (including paying for health insurance, clothing, food, rent, and child care).

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"I've heard a survivor talk about her eight-year-old boy treating her the way he saw his father treat her – that's horrifying. Rather than looking at the kids and saying, 'Well, look what they lived through; they'll never be okay,' our job is to get them to be okay. Why shouldn't they be healthy adults? So that's where I see the work going – treating that trauma and giving them the tools to be healthy."

Survivors also told us about the lasting trauma the abuser's actions placed on the children. Many survivors told us that their children no longer wanted to see the abuser after witnessing physical, sexual or emotional violence. Other survivors said the stigma that the community placed on the whole family, rather than just the abusive parent, left their children vulnerable to bullying in school or to shunning by former close friends. We heard from both survivors and victim advocates about the difficulties of bar/bat mitzvahs, where the rabbi and the Jewish community were unable or unwilling to prevent the abuser from creating tensions at this lifecycle event. So many of those we interviewed told us of survivors' deep concern that their children not lose their Jewish identity because of the actions of the abusers (e.g., forcing the survivors and their children to leave their synagogues to find a new spiritual home). We heard a survivor ask for 'greater kindness and gentleness from the schools when children from broken homes might be having a difficult moment.'

Many of these stories demonstrated how Jewish day schools or Jewish camps could become a sanctuary for their children when the school staff were educated about domestic violence concerns and could respond appropriately (e.g.,

when the abuser showed up to take the children out of school unexpectedly or the abuser refused to pay tuition fees).

We also heard from a survivor about the struggle her son had around his identity as a Jew of Color and the need for greater inclusivity and improved responses to challenges around intersectionality of identity.

Survivors' journey through the stages of change is often guided by the needs and safety of their children. Once a survivor takes action and takes the children with her in search of a safe and stable place to live, the family's need for long-term healing and independence begins. The Jewish community has a particularly important role to play in helping the children find long-term healing and independence: embracing the children in the community and school, instead of shunning them; teaching other children to offer support and love instead of bullying and shame; and employing the same dedication to helping the children to succeed that community members would use with their own children. Children's resilience after domestic violence depends on the community showing the children their own values and strengths and offering these gifts with love.

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

"My son started having internal identity issues of what it means to be Black and Jewish. We went to JFCS, where he was receiving therapy, and we asked the community to help us support his cultural and Jewish identities. I went to four rabbis and said, 'He loves his Judaism, but he is missing the cultural piece. How do we help support him?' And they didn't have answers."

Factors that make children resilient

Studies show that some children can recover from exposure to domestic violence. Resilient children did not develop depression or problems with defiance or anger. There are several factors researchers have found that contribute to the likelihood that a child exposed to domestic violence will ultimately have positive outcomes. Many of the resources that domestic violence programs offer can bolster these factors:

A safe and stable home, free from abuse
(HOUSING)

Knowing that adults will protect them

(LEGAL ASSISTANCE, COUNSELING)

Problem-solving and self-regulation skills
(COUNSELING)

Understanding that they are not responsible for the abuser's acts
(COUNSELING)

Learning how to resolve conflict non-violently
(YOUTH PREVENTION PROGRAMS)

A close connection with a non-abusive parent, who in turn has supports for their parenting
(LEGAL ASSISTANCE, COUNSELING)

A safe and confidential place to work through their experiences and emotions
(COUNSELING)

Normal routines, like going to school
(COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT)

The Jewish community can contribute to the resilience of children exposed to domestic violence by helping them develop a strong cultural identity, living in an environment where they can have friendships and social events, and making it clear that the children are welcome and treasured members of the community



Children

KEY FINDINGS

The number one reason women stay in abusive relationships is because of their children.

They fear losing their children in custody battles to the abuser, the dangers of court ordered visitation, and other traumatizing actions.

Often women choose to leave their abuser when their children's safety is threatened.

Increased support by the community will help build children's resiliency and well-being well into the future.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Jewish community must come together to create spaces of belonging and make sure the children who have survived domestic violence, feel included and not ostracized, with sensitivity to recognizing challenges that Jews of Color may experience in feeling nurtured and included.

The Jewish community can do much to end the cycle of violence by helping the children who have experienced domestic violence build their resiliency.

The Jewish community can ensure that children's needs are being met through access to computers, internet, tutoring, and other educational supports.

All Jewish youth serving organizations, including camps, schools, youth groups, and athletic teams, must have ongoing training to understand and support children witnesses of domestic violence.



Clergy

The Jewish community and its leaders are at the heart of the long-term healing and help that Jewish survivors need. The survivors we spoke with told us how deeply isolated they feel as they experience abuse and how much they long for the Jewish community to understand their experiences and support them. Victim advocates and survivors alike pointed to the leadership of Jewish clergy as being critical to encouraging an effective response to domestic violence from the Jewish community.

The results of the Needs Assessment illustrated for us the deep concern that Jewish clergy have about domestic violence in their congregations. More importantly, the survey results, in combination with what JWI learned during the follow-up interviews, demonstrated that clergy want to have the appropriate training and resources to identify, respond to, and educate their communities about domestic violence. Participants also demonstrated a deep interest to building collaborations with the Jewish organizations serving domestic violence survivors in their communities to ensure a coordinated victim-centered response to domestic violence — a response informed by Jewish law, teachings, and faith.

Clergy respondents indicated that they are deeply concerned about abuse in the homes of their congregants and want to respond appropriately. They shared that their congregations or organizations have made efforts to address domestic violence over the last couple of years, though they also acknowledge that they need more training to support survivors.

Not surprisingly, one rabbi noted that simply raising the issue in a sermon or a community discussion encourages survivors to disclose their experiences:

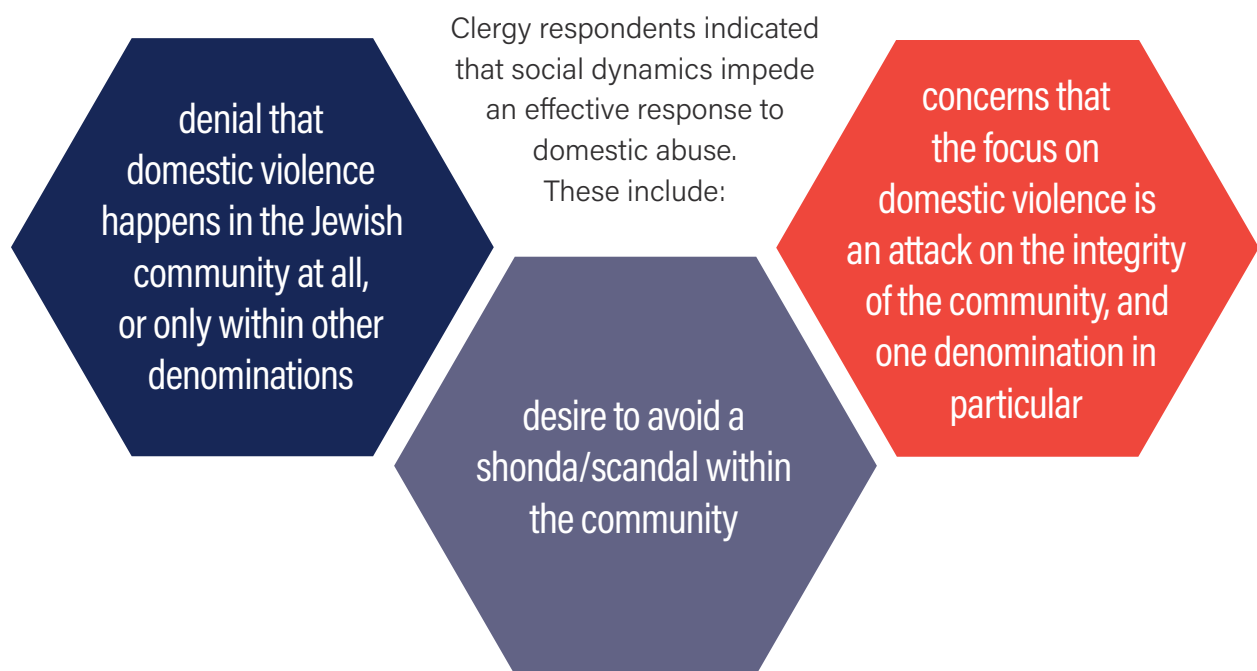
“The more I am engaged in the work of responding to domestic violence, the more people approach me.”

Two-thirds of clergy respondents reported that they have been approached by victims of domestic abuse and were often the first professional the survivor approached. Clergy who have addressed domestic violence in their congregations expressed some frustration with the Jewish community's lack of engagement in the issue. As one rabbi noted:

"This is a whole systemic issue. We have been running around trying to put out fires."

The clergy were ready to move beyond interventions — not only responding to abuse when it occurs, but also engaging in prevention work — establishing a community with healthier relationships and families. The clergy saw an important opportunity to use Jewish text to provide preventive education to their communities. One participant asked: "Are there places in Chumash (Torah) and Tanach (Bible), or in Gemara (Talmud), Halachah (Jewish law), and Hashkafa (Jewish thought) where healthy relationships can be discussed?"

Other clergy expressed their belief that they should set clear expectations as to what a healthy relationship looks like and how families in their community could live up to these expectations. They wanted to develop clear policies about how to handle domestic violence in the community (for example, establishing how perpetrators should be treated by a congregation). One participant noted that standards concerning abuse in the home are basic to Jewish belief: "We should say that the Torah is opposed to domestic violence."



These challenges indicate that a great deal more work needs to be done with clergy to overcome these barriers to survivor safety.

Clergy can feel overwhelmed by incidents or disclosures of domestic violence and believe that training can be helpful in building their ability to appropriately respond and address and support families experiencing violence. In the survey, nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported that they wanted more education or guidance in identifying and responding to domestic violence. As one participant noted:

“There is always a need for more training and, even with all the training I have, I often feel as though I’m not 100% prepared.”

Another participant said:

“The more rabbis are educated about domestic abuse and about how to address it — and are empowered to address it — the more they will feel comfortable doing it.”

While rabbinical support of survivors can be critical, advocates shared that not all their Orthodox clients seek approval or permission from their rabbi. One advocate shared that survivors from the Hasidic communities almost always have a rabbi back them. While survivors from other Orthodox communities do not usually seek permission or approval to come forward, they usually do check in with the rabbi if a witness needs to be called to verify the abuse. The advocate shared that at some point in the process there’s often a rabbi supporting them,

“in being able to say ‘Yes, filing for divorce is okay; going to this court is okay, or we’ll help you set up a Beit Din (rabbinical court). Clients without any rabbinical support can end up being ostracized entirely because they’re not getting that.”

But another advocate said that in her experience it’s a small percentage of clients who seek permission from rabbis and that about half of her clients probably don’t even want to talk to their rabbi. Survivors who do engage with rabbis turn to a rabbi who isn’t associated with the family and doesn’t have a relationship with the husband/abuser.

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

“For some people the needle on denial has changed from denial to maybe it’s not so bad like, it’s, ‘Oh, but we have abuse, but it’s not physical. Or it’s not as pervasive or it’s a lower rate or only happens to the Orthodox.’ There’s different versions of the denial now. But when there’s an actual live situation, that’s when their denial perks up because, ‘Oh, well, it couldn’t be this person.’ Getting the rabbis to move from the theoretical agreement of, yes, it happens to actually holding an abuser accountable is sort of where we sit now.”

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

“My ex kept on trying to find me and I really didn’t feel safe. I think that Jewish organizations should really, really find ways to make it safe for people to feel safe. My synagogue didn’t have any safety planning. When I told them about the situation I was in they said they didn’t have any protocols and didn’t have any relationship with a domestic violence program. Now they do. I think a rabbi should be prepared to understand how to make the synagogue safe. I’ve witnessed that both parents are in a synagogue and it’s not safe, even in our preschool!”

Another advocate relayed the experience of a 24-year-old Orthodox client with three children whose rabbi showed up with a moving van and two other men to help move her out of her house into an apartment close to the *shul*, sharing,

“They moved her out in one morning, and then that afternoon we went and we filed for custody and she was able to do it because she had the community’s support.”

One rabbi reported:

About two weeks after I led a training for a board of rabbis and encouraged them to speak about domestic violence during their sermons, a rabbi called me and told me he never had a case of domestic abuse in the community ‘until the first time I spoke about it from the pulpit.’ The training had prepared him, the participant continued, he was perceived as being a safe person to talk to by the woman.

Clergy’s unique role as a trusted resource is to provide victim-centered, trauma-informed responses to survivors and their children, guide them to the appropriate resources, and be a spiritual support, if desired by the survivor. Rabbis are also responsible for helping the survivor obtain a *get* if it is being denied by her husband. Ten of the clergy respondents stated they had successfully helped obtain the *get*. Withholding a *get* is a form of domestic violence by which the husband maintains control over his wife, even when civilly divorced, forcing her to remain married to him under Jewish law and thereby denying her the ability to leave the relationship.

Clergy are interested in training on:

- Dynamics of domestic violence
- Honoring the safety needs of survivors during lifecycle events
- Appropriate support to survivors in non-emergency or non-crisis situations
- Best practices for working in partnership with a local domestic violence program
- Accountability for perpetrators
- Responding to a domestic violence emergency or crisis
- Best practices around premarital counseling
- Abuse in later life
- How to educate community about domestic violence and what they can do

Survivors must be assured that Judaism does not condone abuse and that abuse is not tolerated within the synagogue or organization. By demonstrating that the shonda of domestic violence falls on the abusive partner, not the victimized partner, rabbis and cantors can create victim-centered and trauma-informed responses to domestic violence in the Jewish community.

Clergy reported that they often feel isolated and powerless to confront domestic violence and made it clear that they would value assistance and guidance from the domestic violence victim service organizations in the community. Advocates would like to be able to offer this guidance as well. As one advocate reported:

“The rabbis are trying to be supportive along the way, but they don’t really understand the process and they just want to hurry it up, and we’re saying, ‘That’s not an option. Really. Here’s the narrative; here’s what’s going to happen.’”

These collaborations can help clergy clarify their roles relieving them of the daunting idea that it is necessary for them to provide all the resources that survivors might need. One participant said that collaborating with domestic violence victim service agencies meant that, “I could play my role as clergy and could know how to help best.” Clergy also reported they would appreciate additional resources to help them address domestic violence including inserts for synagogue newsletters, as well as scripts and guidance for speaking with survivors and perpetrators.

An Advocate Shared:

“I’d love to really have the rabbis see us as the resource, know who to call when this happens, and not feel that they have to know the answers. They just have to know where to turn.”

Respondents think that congregations, organizations, and clergy associations will also benefit from greater collaborations with direct service providers. They understand that working together will help make Jewish spaces safer for families experiencing abuse. Examples of work being done by clergy respondents include connecting with the local direct service agency, *tzedakah* projects, leading awareness and education programs, and initiating policy development within their organizations.

Some survey participants indicated that local domestic violence advocates had already done some outreach to their congregations, but that these efforts had not progressed far beyond that. One participant noted:

“We have a relationship with a local domestic violence organization and have had speakers from time to time, but there has never been a dedicated program for this need in our congregation.”

Advocates would like to have deeper collaborations and partnerships with clergy as well, but report that it is often difficult to get the attention of rabbis. The advocates who have been successful find that these are often very valuable relationships. An advocate who has developed a Rabbinic Advisory Council made up of 100 members said that, “There’s a lot of power that comes from getting clergy on board. It’s a very strong representation of the rabbis here. It’s every denomination and that has hugely shifted the denial.” Another advocate is developing a list of rabbinical endorsements showing support for the mission of the organization so that people may feel more comfortable coming forward and asking for help from the agency.

While some clergy expressed the belief that victim advocates should take the lead in reaching out to individual clergy as the most effective way of establishing collaborative relationships, some victim advocates expressed that rabbis, as the representatives and leaders of the Jewish community, had the responsibility to use their stature in the community to encourage broad partnerships. No matter who initiates the collaboration, it is a critical part of addressing survivors’ needs with the goal of providing seamless service and resources to survivors, whether they are in crisis or are at the end of a long journey of escaping abuse.

A rabbi shared:

“One-on-one is the most effective way to build personal relationships to engage clergy. That’s what happened to me: someone reached out to me and asked me to get involved. It has become a cause that I champion.”

While domestic violence advocates may find clergy have a limited understanding of the issue, some clergy find that advocates do not understand the nature of congregations or other organizations in which clergy work. Building trust by learning about each other's concerns and work will make it possible to increase understanding, education, and professional capacity. In the context of mutually respectful relationships, domestic violence advocates can help clergy literally and figuratively find their voice in addressing domestic violence and the challenges clergy may face when the perpetrator and survivor are within the congregation.

Rabbis are in a unique position to help a survivor and her children through the stages of change. While domestic violence victim services programs will play the primary role in providing survivors with the resources and skills they need to establish a new life free from abuse,

...rabbis' leadership role in the Jewish community is key to helping survivors recognize and understand what domestic violence is by

- offering sermons and pre-marital counseling (*pre-contemplation*),
- guiding survivors to informative resources by educating the whole Jewish community about domestic violence (*contemplation*),
- supporting survivors as they leave the violence in their homes by referring them to appropriate services (*action*), and
- marshaling the resources of the Jewish community in embracing and helping the survivor and her children in the congregation and Jewish day schools, helping survivors obtain *gets*, and creating safe and affirming places during life-cycle events, as well as housing in the community (*long-term healing and independence*).

Most importantly, the rabbi can listen to a survivor in a confidential and non-judgmental way, affirming that Judaism has no home for domestic violence. Along every part of this continuum of change, a rabbi who has appropriate training and strong connections with local domestic violence victim services programs can create a community of peace to support survivors and their children.

Effective collaborative relationships between advocates and clergy are an important component of creating communities that provide victim-centered supports for survivors and promote healthy relationships for all families and individuals.



Clergy

KEY FINDINGS

Two-thirds of clergy respondents reported that they have been approached by victims of domestic abuse and were often the first professional the survivor approached.

Clergy want additional training in order to feel more confident in supporting survivors.

Clergy seek collaboration and new partnerships with Jewish domestic violence victim service programs to build their capacity to address domestic violence.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

All rabbinical and cantorial seminaries should incorporate victim-centered trauma-informed domestic violence training into curricula.

Training must be ongoing throughout clergy's professional life.

Clergy and clergy organizations must develop deeper collaborations with local domestic violence providers.

Clergy and clergy organizations should be engaging in regular conversations about domestic violence in sermons, statements, and public awareness to create safe spaces for survivors to come forward.

Rabbis must understand that withholding a 'get' is a form of abuse and must help survivors obtain a 'get' from a recalcitrant husband.



Importance of Jewish Culturally-Specific Programs

Jewish survivors are less likely to seek help from mainstream providers because of a concern about exposing negative realities to outsiders (*shonda*) as well as a fear that those providers may believe she comes from a privileged community and therefore her experiences may be discounted or not believed. Mainstream providers acknowledge this misperception and reluctance of Jewish survivors while at the same time acknowledging their lack of understanding and training to respond to Jewish culturally specific needs. Case in point, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2021 increased funding for culturally specific and underserved domestic violence programs.

Programs are funded through a variety of sources, including government, Jewish Federations, community fundraisers, and individual donations. These Jewish programs serve all survivors while also providing culturally specific services to Jewish clients. While Jewish programs may be members of larger mainstream umbrella organizations or state coalitions, a noticeable gap is the existence of an umbrella organization specifically meeting the needs of Jewish domestic violence programs.

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

“As a Jewish person, it just felt like I was getting to talk to my family and open up to my family. I felt sort of an instant click with the staff because we have that same background and culture and understanding — that definitely took down the barrier to seeking help, to know that I was talking to people in the Jewish community.”

In addition to safety planning, case management, counseling, shelter referrals, shelters, transitional housing, court accompaniment, help obtaining public benefits, financial assistance, financial counseling, job training, hotlines and helplines, survey data show that Jewish programs provide culturally appropriate services. These services include providing kosher kitchens and/or food, not running programs or meetings on Shabbat, collaborating with rabbis and clergy, incorporating Beit Din accompaniment and mikvah attendant training into their provided services, and hiring employees who speak the languages of the clients served. For Israeli survivors or women whose abusers are Israeli, there was a comfort in speaking with advocates who have a more nuanced understanding of Israel and Israeli culture.

Having access to and awareness of local Jewish providers and advocates is critical. As one survivor stated:

“To feel validated in your own community is really important. It’s hard to be vulnerable and ask for help without feeling shame. If Jewish domestic violence organizations can be more proactive in their community outreach, I think that that would change the conversation for people who are suffering and don’t want to share.”

Jewish survivors shared that they would have been less likely to seek help from a secular program, and that finding support from Jewish programs was critical to their healing journey.

“My mom had heard about a Jewish domestic violence program and she said, ‘I really think you should go there. I think they could help you.’ I started going to counseling and support groups offered by the program, and it was definitely lifesaving and life changing.”

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

*“In support groups we always talked about the Hebrew month and what we learned from that month and things about that month that we wanted to call into our lives. We did *tashlich* in a way or would write things we wanted to let go of. It was just really woven into everything that we did.”*

The survivors believed that having advocates who understood the nuances of their experience, the culture of the Jewish community, as one advocate explained:

“I think it’s always really important, probably in every culture that people be able to see somebody that looks like them, um, and that understands who they are. And I realize that’s not uniform across the Jewish community, but there’s something about being Jewish that is shared across our communities.”

Healing rituals for survivors can be particularly powerful when rooted in faith and spirituality. Jewish programs can provide this for survivors to help them on their healing journey. While not all Jewish programs include these types of rituals, all include references to aspects of Judaism making them comfortable and affirming for survivors.

Advocates shared that long term peer-to-peer support for survivors can be invaluable in helping survivors on their journey. One advocate said,

"My dream is to create a peer program where every woman who comes to us has a peer, someone with lived experience who can help mentor them through the process of leaving, being in shelter and then holding their hands, someone who's made it, someone who they can look at and say, 'this is who I want to be.'"

It isn't only the survivors who are in need of support from people with shared experiences. Advocates are as well. As part of this project, JWI launched monthly peer-to-peer support forums facilitated by advocates and for advocates. Advocates share they are feeling 'burned out' and overwhelmed, and value regular opportunities to meet with other advocates outside of their agency. These forums are a place for advocates to share challenges and strategies for providing trauma-informed spiritual, physical, and emotional support to Jewish clients. Each forum ends in a guided meditation rooted in Jewish values. Advocates are finding these forums to be invaluable. Having time and opportunity to connect with each other is helping advocates feel supported in their work while reigniting old connections and making new ones and want more opportunities to connect with each other.

In addition, many of these advocates lack access to high-level trainings that would allow them to stay up-to-date on the latest best practices or emerging issues, want support in identifying grants and other funding opportunities, and are stressed to develop their own public awareness campaigns targeted at Jewish communities.

Every key informant we spoke to affirmed that survivors needed the embrace of the Jewish community as deeply as they needed housing, legal representation, financial assistance, and counseling. In every success story we heard, one of the key elements that helped survivors and their children achieve long-term healing and independence was the support of the Jewish community. Survivors needed to know that the community believed what was happening to them, that the community did not condone domestic violence, and that survivors would not be deprived of access to the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the Jewish community.



Importance of Jewish Culturally- Specific Programs

KEY FINDINGS

Jewish domestic violence programs serve a unique need, providing survivors a safe space to heal.

Advocates want to deepen their connections with each other.

Peer-to-peer support forums are an invaluable tool for advocates to connect, learn, and share with each other and other forms of connection.

While Jewish programs may be members of larger mainstream umbrella organizations or state coalitions, a noticeable gap is the existence of an umbrella organization specifically meeting the needs of Jewish domestic violence programs.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a national umbrella organization to support all the Jewish domestic violence providers and advocates by providing specialized trainings, advocacy, and support, as well connecting advocates through conferences, newsletters, virtual gatherings and events.

Continue peer-to-peer support forums launched as part of JWI's Needs Assessment.

Establish Jewish domestic violence programs in those Jewish communities where there is none and establish a national hotline to enable Jewish survivors from anywhere in the country to access help.

Fund programs to ensure they are fully staffed and able to provide survivors with equally robust services to their mainstream counterparts.



A Survivor-Centered Response to Domestic Violence in the Jewish Community

The Jewish community needs to center the survivor in its response to domestic violence. At their most vulnerable, when most in need of connection, women feel abandoned and are made to feel ashamed of their status as a victim of abuse, excluded by friends and family and institutions. It is important to note that these experiences happen within all the denominations. We heard about this in different forms — victims who are no longer invited to Shabbat meals, or whose children no longer have play dates and whose friends won't come over, or who are blamed for the abuse, or shunned.

One advocate observed:

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

"Every step of the way the Jewish community was there to help and that made all the difference."

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"I think the community's tolerance of bad behavior and abusive behavior is a huge problem. I can come up with so many examples of the problem becoming a bigger problem because the community was tolerant."

"As far as friends and family, it seems like there's either a disconnect between the family unit, or their friends seem to not sort of be there for them. I would imagine in other communities they're more supportive."

This is the true shonda in our community which prioritizes connection and prides itself on being a warm, welcoming, inclusive and highly networked ecosystem, where Jewish geography is a routine party game and where no one is a stranger for long. As one survivor shared:

"It's hard enough to lose your marriage, but to lose your world too is devastating. Abandonment at this time is particularly cruel."

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS:

"He was a real estate developer – a mega-wealthy guy and the president of the Federation. The community basically shunned me, because they wanted his money and they didn't want to have anything to do with me. And that was incredibly hurtful; just so painful for me because it was the Jewish community... He was physically, sexually, emotionally, and psychologically abusive to me."

Contrast this to how perpetrators are able to maintain their position in the community. Whether out of deference to the abuser's status, blaming the victim, or even a disbelief that someone they know could possibly have committed such acts, advocates and survivors report that perpetrators are better able to remain in the community. As a survivor shared:

"People may think they're being neutral, but they're taking sides favoring the more powerful and well-connected abusers."

Another survivor shared:

"I've witnessed that – when one person is a large donor or contributes X amount of dollars, the other person's story is kind of shoved aside."

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"The community seems to support the powerful person in the relationships. That person keeps being enabled throughout all the systems. There's so much stigma. Through whatever channels there are you just see who gets kind of brought in and who gets pushed out."

Too often our community's institutions — schools, synagogues, summer camps, JCCs, etc., are not prepared to ensure the safety and well-being of the survivor and her children. Survivors and advocates reported that these Jewish spaces did not know their responsibilities around how to enforce protective orders, understand the differences between legal and physical custody — letting the abuser pick up the child after school, despite a court order, do not understand responsibilities of being a mandated reporter, and have no policies protecting the survivor during life-cycle events when the abuser might be expected to be present, or ensuring that she feels safe whether in the sanctuary, the kiddush, or going home, and continue to honor and/or employ a 'recalcitrant' husband who refuses to give a *get*, and conflate giving money or being a *macher* with being a 'good guy.' These gaps are not acceptable and are a betrayal by the very institutions that are the backbone of our community.

AN ADVOCATE SPEAKS:

"An approach that rabbis can take is to tell the husband: "I'm asking you to stay away because whatever is occurring in the relationship, it's chaotic; it's disruptive; it's not a peaceful, healthy environment for your children. So stop harassing your wife, yelling through the front door and the window and banging on the house."

Even in circumstances where a Jewish institution acknowledges an instance of domestic violence, the conversation often focuses on whether the abuser did *t'shuva* and on the complexity of how to handle everything when both the abuser and the survivor are members of the congregation or active in the organization.

Centering the needs of survivors is the guiding principle that will change these dynamics. Ensuring that she and her children feel safe, valued, and included in all Jewish spaces requires new thinking and reflection.

A Survivor's Story

This survivor's story is an example of how the Jewish community centered her needs and is a beautiful example of the Jewish community at its best.

"I had no clue where I was going, but it had to be out of there.... I had to find a place to go and I didn't have much time to think."

The survivor filled garbage bags with necessities, stopped at the bank to get cash, and drove with her three children and mother to another city to catch a flight to her brother's house. In her words:

"We spent the week trying to figure out where I would go. And I said, 'Well, I have a good friend whose dad lives in Great Falls, Montana.' But my brother said, 'You have shorts and t-shirts, and your kids go to day school and a Solomon Schechter preschool — there's no way you're going to Great Falls, Montana with five Jews.

"A friend of his happened to call from Tucson and my brother said I should go there. His friend happened to be in real estate, and she found us a place to rent. When we got there, I went to the Jewish day school and I said, 'I need help. I need my daughter to go to school here.' And they didn't ask any questions. They said, 'Come back with your daughter and she can pick out which class she wants to be in.'

"And then I needed to find a place to say *Yizkor*. I called a synagogue and asked if I could come. [At services], the rabbi came up to me and said, 'You must be the new person in town. What's your story?' And I broke down and told him.

It turned out he had been seminary roommates with my rabbi back home, and I said, 'Oh my God, you cannot relay anything to him.' He said, 'Don't worry. I will not say anything. What do you need?' I said, 'I need a preschool for my son.' He said, 'We have a Solomon Schechter preschool.' And I said, 'Well, I can't pay.' And he said, 'Not a problem at all. We're taking you in. You are family.' And then he said, 'But you need counseling services; you can't go through this alone. I'm going to put you in touch with Jewish Family Services.' And so he began the process for us to have therapy, and I also had family therapy for my kids."

"I needed a dentist, and a parent of one of my daughter's classmates at the Hebrew Academy was a dentist, and he took care of us. We had no crib, the baby was sleeping on towels on the floor. It was the Jewish community that brought us a crib, and a high chair, and a car seat, and membership to the JCC, and invited us to *Shabbos* dinner...."

"Within the Jewish community, I was able to find the help I needed, and give my kids a sense of normalcy in an abnormal situation."

Today, this survivor is a development professional in the Jewish community. In her words,

"When I make my 'ask,' I've been on both sides. I've been the one that has been able to give a lot, but I've also been the one that had to take a lot as well. So it comes truly from the heart."

Trainings and collaborations are key in order for the Jewish community to re-orient itself and center the needs of survivors. Domestic violence advocates expressed the need for more community outreach and education platforms about what domestic violence is, who should be reaching out for help, and how to be supportive. Friends and family need to be included in community outreach since often they are the first people survivors tell their stories to. They must know to listen and believe the survivor. A survivor shared that it would have been helpful if her friends and family knew how to support her and understood the dynamics of domestic violence.

Another survivor shared that while on a gap year program in Israel she dated an Israeli man who was physically, sexually, and emotionally abusive to her. When she returned to the U.S. for break, one of her close friends noticed her black eye and bruises on her arm. He could tell what was going on, and he said to her, "You can't go back." Her parents on the other hand were worried about losing the money they had paid for the rest of the semester and didn't understand why she couldn't just go back to Israel and stay away from her ex-boyfriend. Her friend's advice was potentially life-saving, and speaks again to the need for friends and family — whole communities — to understand the dynamics and red flags of abuse.

As a survivor observed:

"If friends and family just had had maybe a little education about how to support me, that would've been helpful. Also, I had never learned about the cycle of violence until I came in as a client. That would have been good for me to know earlier so that when this stuff started happening in my relationship, I could identify it."

Survivors and their children need a second chance to have a good life, to have the possibility of growth and peace for them and their children (long-term healing and independence) and our community needs to be there for them. Strengthening collaborations with Jewish domestic violence organizations is a step in the right direction.

**A SURVIVOR
SPEAKS:**

"I don't fault the organizations. They need the money to do the stuff that they need to do. I mean, I'm not saying that they should not take his money, but there's no reason to go overboard in the accolades. And there's no reason to shun me."

**A SURVIVOR
SPEAKS:**

"The most important thing for me was having my friend believing what was happening to me was happening. And a sympathetic ear. Because I didn't have visible wounds. And it looked like I was living, you know, a very comfortable lifestyle."



A Survivor-Centered Response to Domestic Violence in the Jewish Community

KEY FINDINGS

The Jewish community is failing survivors and their children.

Survivors value the Jewish community but often feel stigmatized by it.

Communities still prioritize the macher over the victim.

Men are still withholding the get as a means of asserting power over their wives even after a civil divorce has been granted.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Tackle such issues as get abuse, privileging the macher, and stigmatizing the survivor by building survivor-centered responses to domestic violence in Jewish homes.

Implement trauma-informed and victim-centered training and policies for organizations to support survivors and their children.

Prioritize public awareness and educational programs for community members to understand what survivors experience and learn how to support them.

Incorporate healthy relationships and bystander intervention programs in schools.

Create awareness campaigns to normalize signing Halachic pre- and post-nuptial agreements.

CONCLUSION

Although the Jewish community has come a long way since JWI's first Needs Assessment in 2003, it is clear that much work still needs to be done. In this report we have identified significant gaps in the legal, housing, and economic security needs of survivors, as well as failings in our communal response and preparedness, be it through our clergy, our schools, or our neighbors.

All survivors need access to dedicated legal support. All survivors need safe and affordable housing in their communities. All survivors need access to job and entrepreneurial training and financial assistance. All youth-serving organizations need trauma-informed victim-centered training to understand their legal obligations and the emotional and psychological issues faced by children who witnesses domestic violence. Our clergy and our communal institutions need to learn how to prioritize the needs of survivors.

To address these gaps, JWI will be forming a national center that will work in partnership to meet the systemic needs of survivors and to support the local Jewish programs and advocates that serve them.

The path ahead is clear. We asked programs, advocates, clergy members, and survivors what they need and they told us. Now it's up to all of us to respond.

APPENDIX 1:

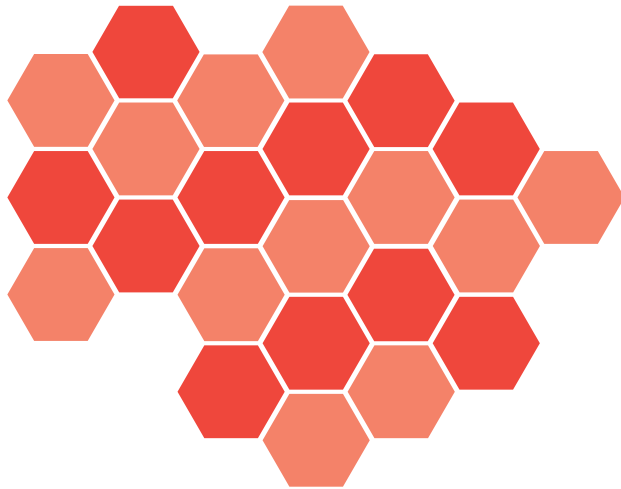
Jewish Domestic Violence Provider Survey Results

Of the 40 Jewish domestic violence programs currently in operation across the U.S., 36 participated in this Needs Assessment: Thirty-three completed the survey, and three more participated in peer-to-peer support forums and interviews with researchers.

Q: Organization Affiliation

40 Jewish providers who have specific domestic violence programs or serve domestic violence survivors filled out the survey:

23 are part of the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

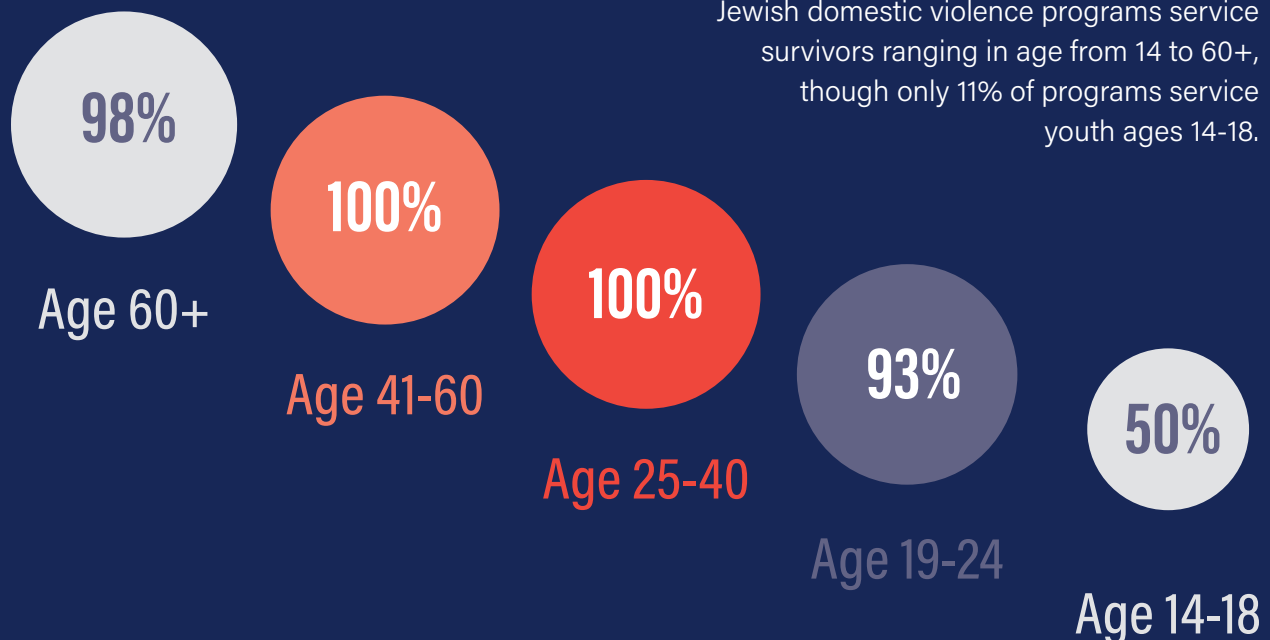


17 are independent Jewish direct service organizations



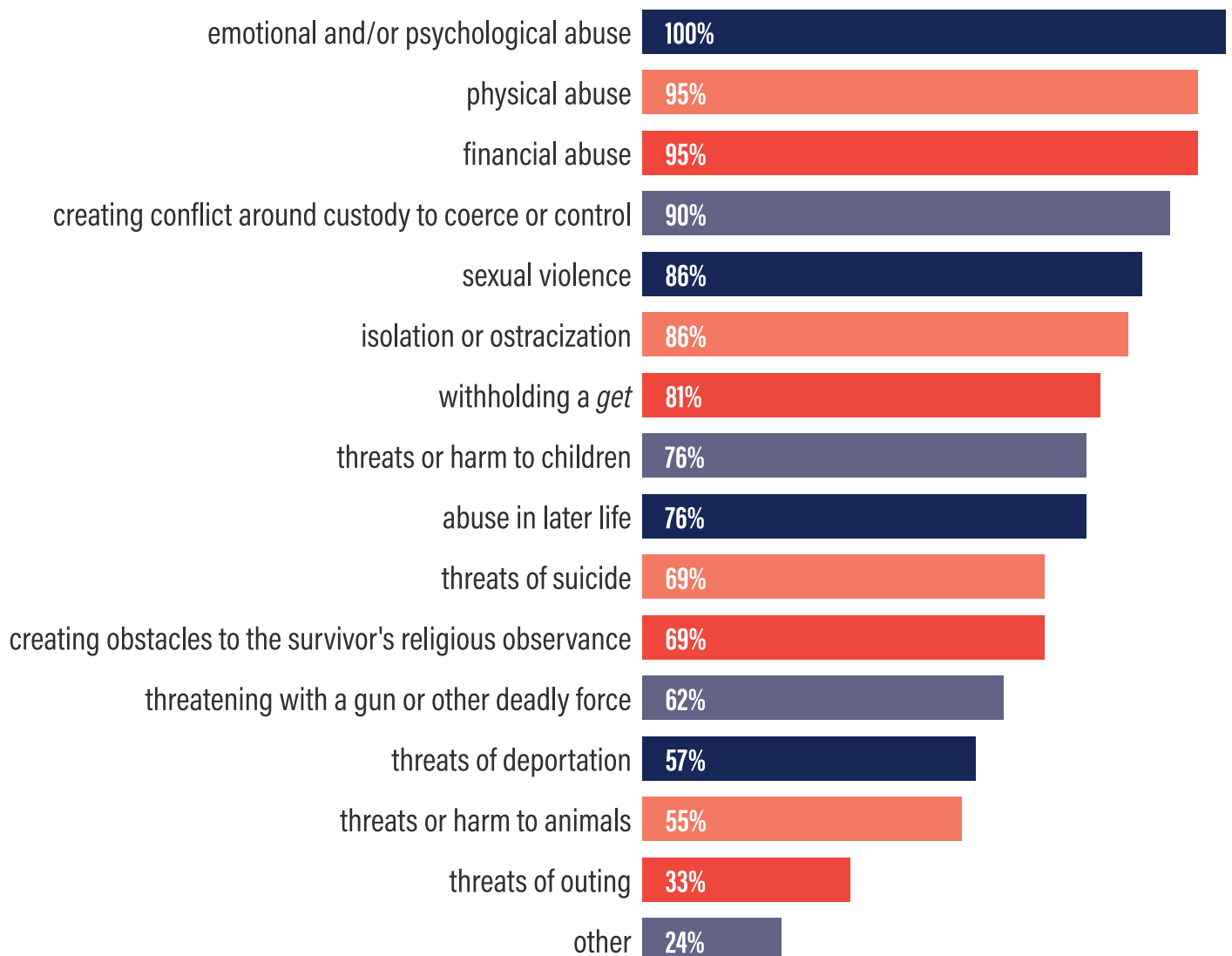
For a full list of organizations who responded to the survey see Appendix 3.

Q: Age Demographics



Q: Types of Intimate Partner Abuse

Jewish survivors of domestic violence experience many of the same forms of violence as domestic violence survivors in general, though, as our data shows, there are unique forms of violence that occur within the Jewish community. The most common forms of violence found in our survey correspond with the most common forms of domestic violence found the general population – emotional/psychological abuse, physical abuse, financial abuse, conflict around custody, isolation or ostracization, and sexual violence. Notably, 81% of the DV providers interviewed indicated that withholding of a *get* was a form of abuse they see in their work. This finding indicates that *get* abuse is a common form of domestic violence in the Jewish community.



Q: Barriers to Addressing Domestic Violence

According to the survey findings, Jewish survivors of domestic violence experience many barriers when trying to address the violence they are experiencing. The most common barrier is a lack of financial resources, followed closely by both concerns about child custody and fear of leaving the relationship. Additional barriers survivors also experienced included family pressure to stay with the partner, a desire to stay in the relationship (if only it could be safe), feelings of embarrassment or guilt (*shonda*), and a lack of support from clergy.

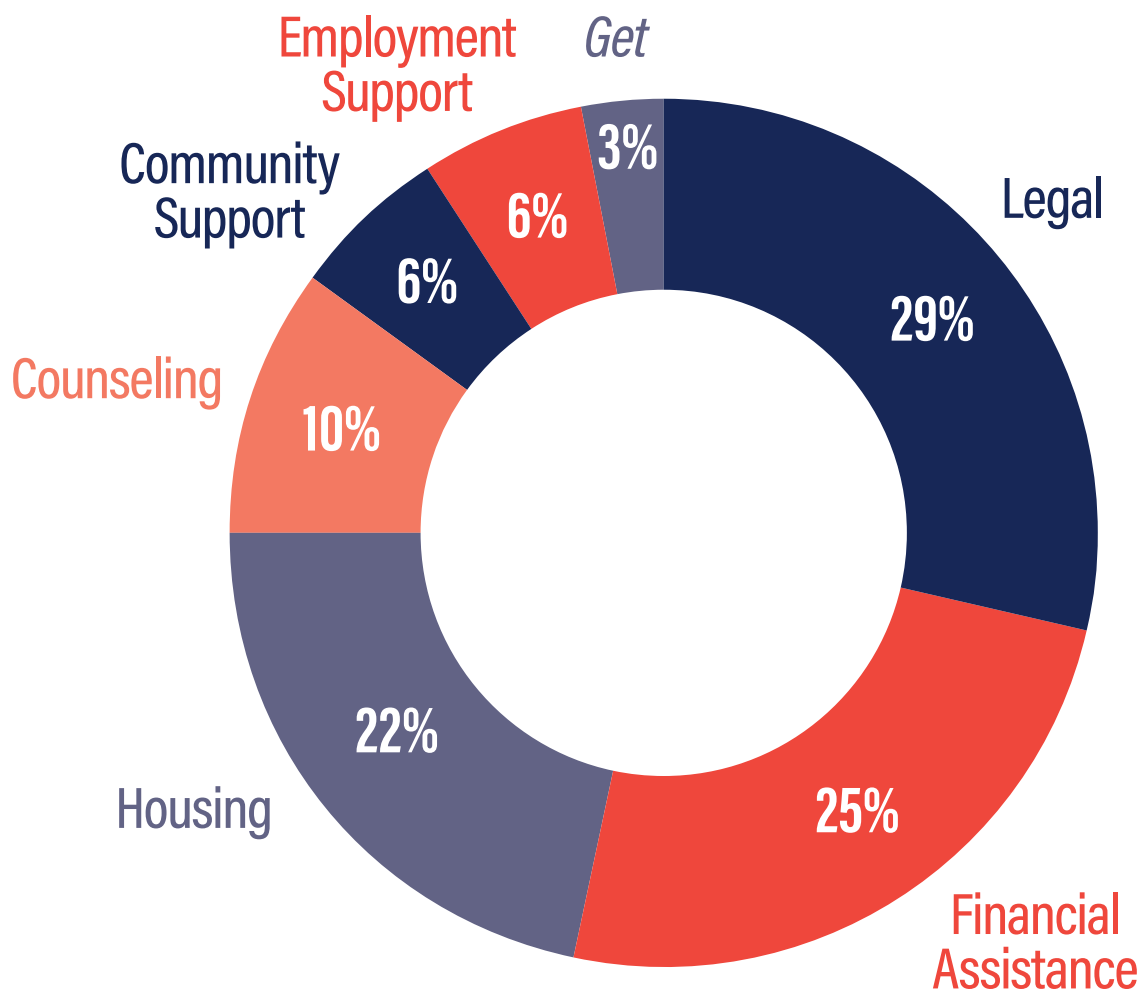


Q: Jewish Clients' Top Needs

The top three needs of Jewish survivors of domestic violence are clear: Survivors are in desperate need of legal support, financial assistance, and housing (shelter, transitional, long term). These three needs correspond to the gaps in domestic violence services both in the Jewish community as well as in the general population.

Lack of community support was noted by six providers as one of the top three needs of survivors, indicating that more needs to be done to educate the Jewish community about domestic violence and create communities of greater understanding and acceptance.

Need	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	Total
Legal	14	10	5	29
Financial Assistance	7	12	6	25
Housing	11	8	3	22
Counseling	0	4	6	10
Community Support	1	1	4	6
Employment Support	0	1	5	6
Get	2	0	1	3

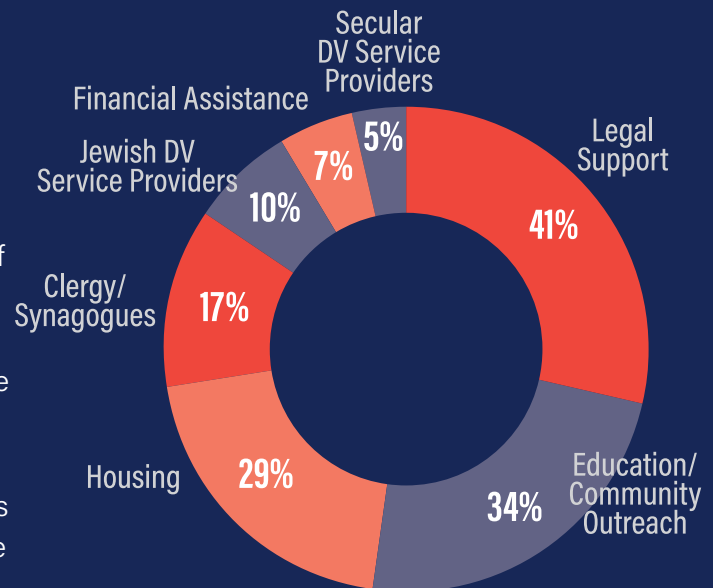


Q: Helpful Community Collaborations

We heard from domestic violence providers that collaborations were needed to work on ways of providing legal support, education/community outreach, housing assistance, and financial assistance. The desire to develop collaborations on legal and housing needs makes sense given that those are two of the greatest needs domestic violence programs see.

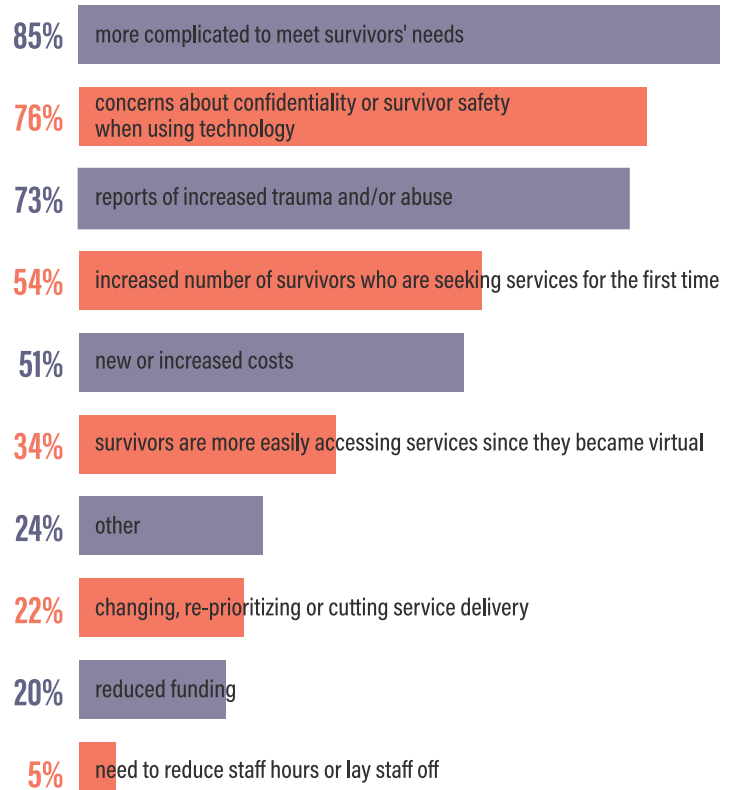
It is interesting that collaborations around educating the community and engaging the community to be more supportive of survivors is the second most common answer to this question. As alluded to earlier, this seems to indicate that the Jewish community needs assistance to be supportive of survivors of domestic violence.

Domestic violence providers are interested in collaborating with Jewish clergy and synagogues, other Jewish domestic violence service providers, as well as local secular domestic violence service providers.



Q: Impact of COVID on Survivors' Needs and Services Provided

The greatest number of respondents indicated that Jewish domestic violence programs have found it more complicated to meet survivors' needs since COVID-19. In addition, these programs have also found an increase in concerns about confidentiality or survivor's safety in using technology, as well as an increase in reports of trauma and/or abuse in the home.

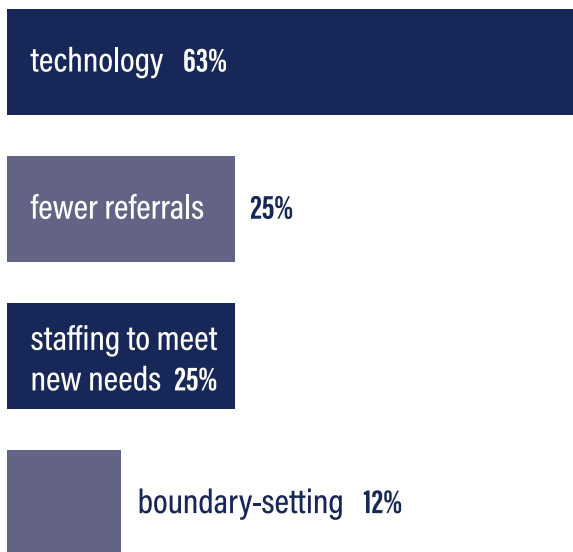


Q: Other Challenges Related to the Pandemic

Jewish domestic violence programs answered this survey question in two ways; the first is to discuss the COVID related challenges that providers are experiencing, and the second is to address the COVID related challenges the survivors they are serving are experiencing. To appropriately analyze the survey findings these sections are separated.

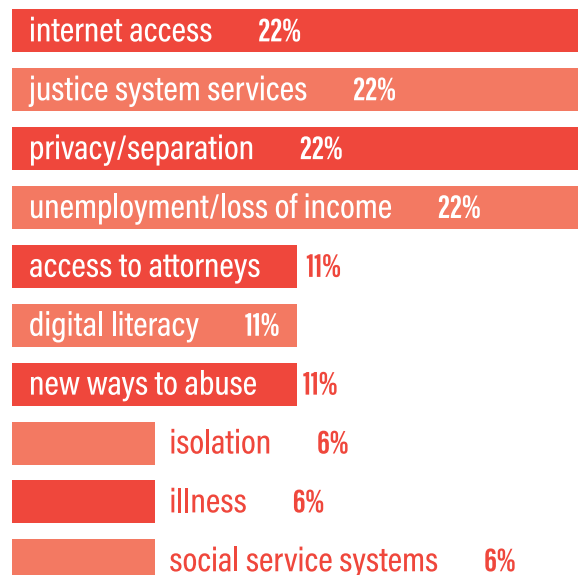
Provider COVID-Related Challenges

The data suggests the most common challenge providers are experiencing as a result of COVID is related to technology – having to purchase new technology to serve clients virtually and train both providers and clients on how to use these new systems (see table below).



Survivor COVID-Related Challenges

The most common challenges survivors are experiencing as a result of COVID are access to internet, the lack of justice system services, limited privacy or separation at home, and loss of income or unemployment. A small number of programs also indicated that access to attorneys and limited digital literacy have been challenges during COVID19. Two programs also report they are hearing that abusers are finding new ways to abuse including “not allowing children to spend time with their parent who is a health care provider or the abuser not respecting safe practices e.g. as social distance, mask wearing” and “lots of gaslighting” (see table below).



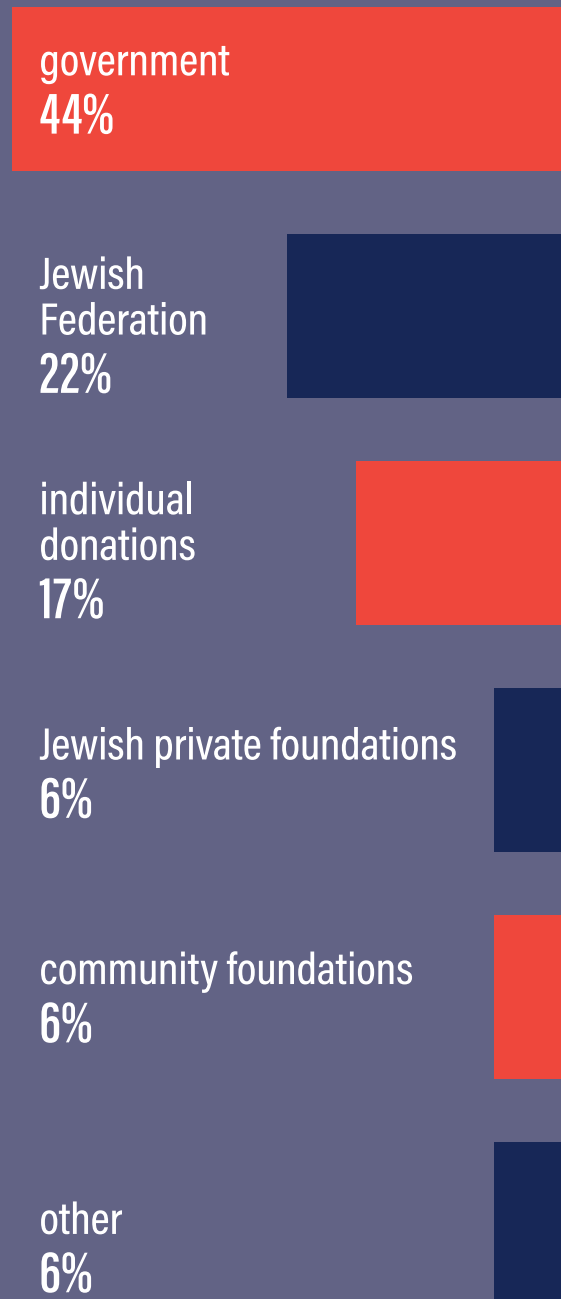
Q: Survivors' First Outreach for Help or Counsel

The most common people survivors turn to first for help are friends/families. The next most common group of people survivors turn to help first are clergy. Not a single domestic violence provider who answered the question indicated that survivors first turn to hotlines/helplines, secular domestic violence programs, medical professionals, or law enforcement.



Q: Top Source of Funding

According to survey data the top funding source for Jewish service providers is by federal, state, and local government. The second and third most common "top funding sources" are the Jewish Federation and individual donors.



Q: Culturally-Sensitive Services for Jewish Clients

Universally, the programs surveyed indicated the organizations work to service the community's needs and the providers within the organizations are trained to be culturally competent in working with the Jewish community. Organizations indicated they implement culturally appropriate services such as providing kosher kitchens and/or food, not running programs or meetings on Shabbat, collaborating with Rabbis and clergy, incorporating *Beit Din* accompaniment and *mikvah* attendant training into their provided services, and hiring employees who speak the languages of the clients served.

Q: Emergency Services at Domestic Violence

Programs (requested by clients / currently offered / would like to offer / no plans to offer)

Nearly all programs surveyed indicated that they provide shelter referrals and safety planning to domestic violence survivors while less than half provide youth crisis intervention and shelter. The most common answer to what survivors are asking for from service providers is court accompaniment and/or help with protection orders, a common theme seen throughout the report. The most common emergency service programs would like to offer are hotlines/helplines.

Q: Direct Services at Domestic Violence

Programs (requested by clients / currently offered / would like to offer / no plans to offer)

The most common services survivors ask for, as indicated in the survey, are legal assistance and court accompaniment, help obtaining public benefits, and financial assistance followed closely by counseling for survivors, safety planning, and financial counseling. The most common services offered are safety planning and help obtaining public benefits followed closely by services for LGBTQ survivors. The most common services domestic violence programs wish they could provide are financial assistance, legal assistance/court accompaniment, and job training.

Q: Other Services and Resources Offered

The majority of survey respondents indicate they currently provide referrals and outsourcing, community outreach and education, training for Jewish clergy, and youth prevention and education, however only a few provide sexual assault services and workplace harassment assistance. The most common services programs "wish they could offer" are sexual assault services and workplace harassment assistance, however programs also indicated those were the two services they had no plans on offering. This most likely represents a gap in services provided by the Jewish community on the full spectrum of gender-based violence.

Q: Work Still Needed in the Community to Better Serve Survivors

Programs surveyed indicated the most common need in the community to better serve survivors are trainings for rabbis, lay leadership, and staff at Jewish organizations as well as improved collaborative relationship with rabbis, lay leaders, and staff in Jewish spaces. A majority of the programs also indicated the need to provide prevention programs for Jewish teens on dating violence and healthy relationships, adopt policies to ensure survivor safety in Jewish spaces, and adopt accountability policies for abusers in Jewish spaces.



APPENDIX 2:

Jewish Clergy Survey Results

Thirty-five Jewish clergy participated in the Needs Assessment.
Eight of the 35 clergy who completed the survey
participated in additional interviews
with Rabbi David Rosenberg.

35 Jewish clergy:

21 rabbis

9 cantors

5 other

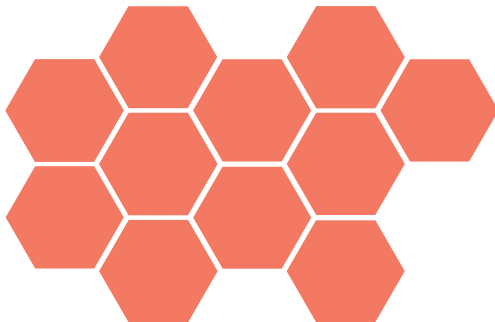
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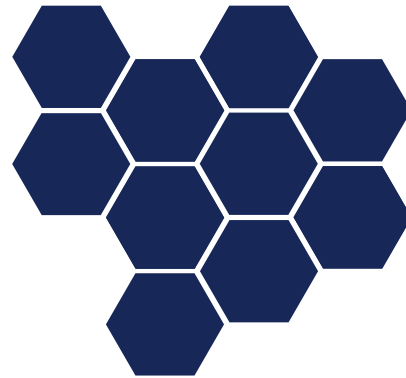
cities

Denomination of Clergy Respondents

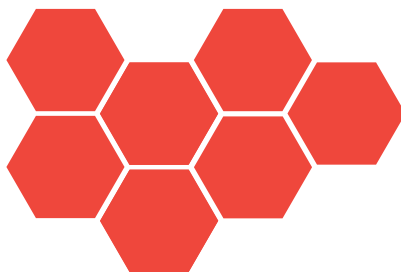
11 Conservative



10 Reform



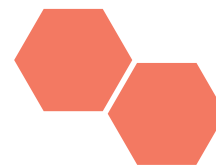
7 Orthodox



5 Unaffiliated/Other

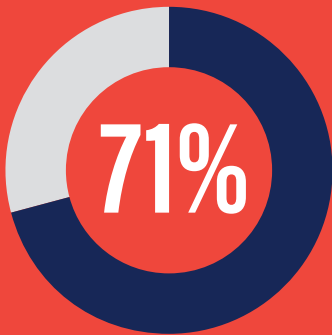


2 Reconstructionist

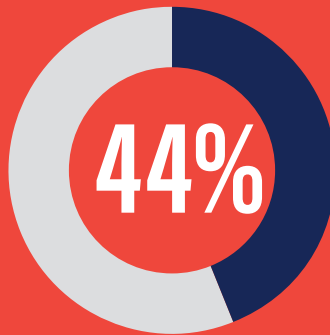


Q: Has anyone ever approached you for help with domestic violence concerns?

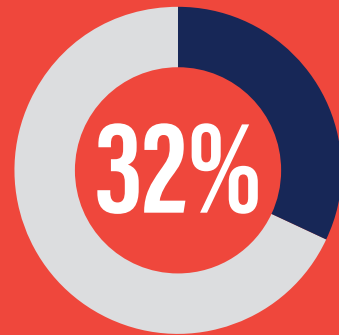
A majority of clergy surveyed (24) indicated that victims of domestic violence have approached them while only 10 said they have never been approached. Fifteen clergy members indicated that they have been the first professional a domestic violence survivor approached.



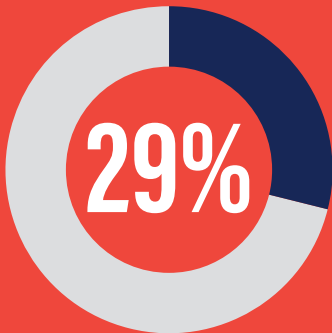
Yes, victims have approached me.



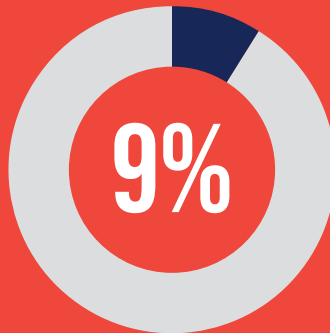
In some cases, I was the first professional the victim approached.



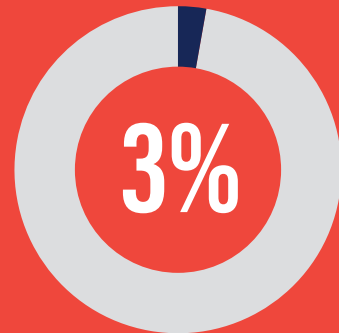
Yes, family members or friends of victims have approached me.



No one has approached me for help with domestic violence concerns.



Yes, family members or friends of perpetrators of domestic violence have approached me.



Yes, perpetrators of domestic violence have approached me.

Q: Do you feel confident about your ability to identify or respond to domestic violence?

Eighteen clergy (53%) indicated that they have had training on how to respond and identify domestic violence. (This of course indicates that much fewer than 50% of clergy have had training due to the selection bias of survey respondents.) Twenty clergy (59%) indicated they want more training; of those, 12 (60%) said they have had previous training. Only 14 clergy (41%) indicated they were confident in their ability to identify or respond to domestic violence; nine of those (64%) still asked for more training.

62% “I would like more training or guidance.”

53% “I have had training”

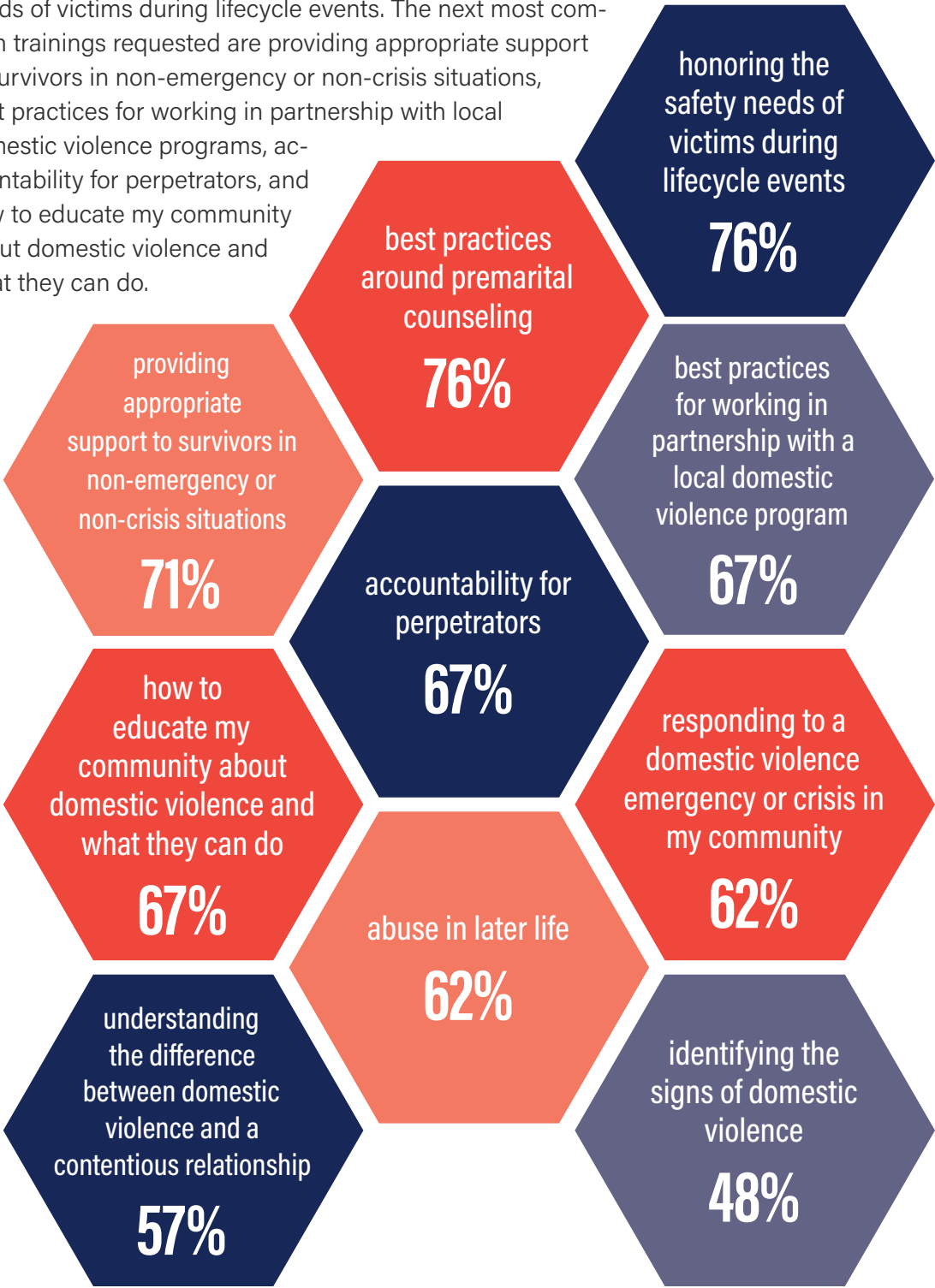
44% “I feel confident about my ability to identify or respond.”

21% “I have not had training.”

15% “I do not feel confident about my ability to identify or respond.”

Q: Which areas of training would be helpful to you?

A majority of clergy surveyed indicated they want training on all of the options provided in the survey question. Two trainings received the highest interest – trainings on best practices around premarital counseling and ways to honor the safety needs of victims during lifecycle events. The next most common trainings requested are providing appropriate support to survivors in non-emergency or non-crisis situations, best practices for working in partnership with local domestic violence programs, accountability for perpetrators, and how to educate my community about domestic violence and what they can do.



Q: Do you refer victims to local domestic violence programs?

By far, the majority of clergy surveyed indicated they refer domestic violence survivors to Jewish domestic violence programs (22) and secular domestic violence program (12). Five clergy stated they do not know of any domestic violence program in their area.

62%

Yes, I refer members to a Jewish domestic violence program.

41%

Yes, I've personally met with advocates at the Jewish domestic violence program and have a working relationship with them.

35%

Yes, I refer members to a secular domestic violence program.

15%

No, I don't know the domestic violence services in my area.

Q: Which kinds of help do your members need when they experience domestic violence?

Clergy report that the help domestic violence survivors need most are counseling, legal assistance, and support for children. Financial assistance and safety needs were also reported at high levels.

counseling for victims of domestic violence	76%
legal assistance or accompaniment	73%
support for children experiencing domestic violence in their homes	64%
financial assistance	61%
safety needs	61%
shelter/housing	48%
obtaining a get	39%
counseling for perpetrators of domestic violence	36%
transportation	24%
other	21%
language access	3%

Q: What has your congregation or organization done in the last couple of years to address domestic violence?

By far the most common things clergy have done to address domestic violence are providing pastoral care or counseling, connecting with Jewish domestic violence programs, and providing education about domestic violence and outreach to victims. Only two clergy surveyed indicated they held perpetrators accountable in any way.

provided pastoral counseling/premarital counseling	64%
connected with a Jewish domestic violence program	61%
provided education about domestic violence and outreach to victims	61%
gave sermons, d'var Torah, prayers on the issue	45%
supported <i>tzedakah</i> contributions or <i>mitzvah</i> projects	36%
gave financial assistance	36%
encouraged the signing of <i>halachic</i> prenuptial agreements	36%
helped the victim obtain a <i>get</i>	30%
sponsored youth workshops on dating violence and healthy relationships	27%
other	18%
developed policies for leadership and staff	15%
included the Lieberman clause in the <i>ketubah</i> when officiating at a wedding	15%
held healing services	12%
held perpetrators accountable	6%

Q: Which new or strengthened collaborations would be most helpful in addressing domestic violence in your community or in the Jewish community at large?

Clergy seek closer collaboration with advocates and DV organizations for themselves, for their congregations and organizations, and for clergy associations. Several respondents expressed that individual outreach to clergy by advocates and DV professionals would be the most effective way of establishing collaborative relationships.

Q: Are you interested in learning about JWI's Clergy Task Force on Domestic Abuse in the Jewish Community?

76% of clergy who responded to this question indicated an interest in learning more about JWI's Clergy Task Force.

APPENDIX 3:
**Domestic
Violence Program
Survey
Respondents**

Domestic Violence Program Survey Respondents

Organization	Program	City	State
Jewish Family & Children's Service, Phoenix	Shelter Without Walls	Phoenix	AZ
Jewish Family Service, San Diego	Project SARAH	San Diego	CA
Jewish Family Service, Los Angeles	JFS Hope	North Hollywood	CA
Alpert Jewish Family Services		West Palm Beach	FL
Jewish Family and Children's Service of the Suncoast, Inc		Sarasota	FL
Ruth & Norman Rales JFS	Domestic Abuse Education and Action Department	Boca Raton	FL
Goodman Jewish Family Services	Domestic Abuse Program	Davie	FL
Jewish Community Services of South Florida	Shalom Bayit	Miami Dade	FL
Jewish Family & Career Services	Shalom Bayit	Atlanta	GA
JCFS Chicago	JCARES Response for Teens	Skokie	IL
SHALVA, Inc.		Chicago & Suburbs	IL
Jewish Family and Children's Services	Journey to Safety	Waltham	MA
CHANA (Counseling, Helpline & Aid Network for Abused Women in Baltimore)		Baltimore	MD
JCADA (Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse)		Rockville	MD
Jewish Family Service of Metro Detroit	JCADA (Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse)	West Bloomfield	MI
Jewish Family Service of Greater Charlotte		Charlotte	NC
Jewish Family and Children's Services of Southern NJ	Project SARAH (Stop Abusive Relationships At Home)	Cherry Hill	NJ

Domestic Violence Program Survey Respondents

Organization	Program	City	State
Jewish Family Service of Greater-Clifton-Passaic	Project S.A.R.A.H.	Clifton	NJ
Edith and Carl Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst	Family Violence Prevention	Brooklyn	NY
Ohel Children's Home and Family Service	Max Stutman Safe Dwelling Program	Brooklyn	NY
Organization for the Resolution of Agunot		New York	NY
New York Legal Assistance Group	Project Eden	New York	NY
The Jewish Board and Family Service		Brooklyn	NY
Commonpoint Queens		Little Neck	NY
Shalom Task Force, Inc.		New York	NY
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty	Family Violence Services	New York	NY
The Safe Center	Project Hope	Bethpage	NY
Jewish Association Serving the Aging (JASA)	LEAP	New York	NY
The Safe Center	Project Hope	Bethpage	NY
Center for Safety and Change	Project Tikvah	New City	NY
Jewish Family Services of Cincinatti		Cincinatti	OH
Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland	JFSA Domestic Violence Services	Cleveland	OH
Jewish Family and Children's Services of Greater Philadelphia		Philadelphia	PA
Dinah		Philadelphia	PA
Jewish Family Service, Houston	Shalom Bayit	Houston	TX
Jewish Family Service of Greater Dallas		Dallas	TX
Jewish Family Service of Seattle	Project DVORA Domestic Violence Services	Seattle	WA

APPENDIX 4:
**Domestic
Violence Program
Interviewees**

Domestic Violence Program Interviewees

Name	Position	Organization	City	State
Cindy Ochoa, LCSW	Manager, Community Services	Jewish Family Service San Diego	San Diego	CA
Karen Rosenthal, LMFT	Director	Family Violence Project of Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles	Los Angeles	CA
Naomi Tucker	Executive Director	Shalom Bayit	San Francisco Bay Area	CA
Robyn Altmann, LCSW	Assistant Director	Family Violence Project of Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles	Los Angeles	CA
Lorrie Conglose, LMHC	Director of Domestic Abuse Education and Action	Ruth and Norman Rales Jewish Family Services	Boca Raton	FL
Sierra Schnitzer, LMHC	Domestic Abuse Program Manager	Goodman Jewish Family Services	Davie	FL
Wendy Lipshutz, LCSW	Program Director	Peace in the Home Program (Shalom Bayit), Jewish Family & Career Services	Atlanta	GA
Carol Ruderman, MBA	Executive Director	SHALVA	Chicago	IL
Amanda Katz, MS	Executive Director	JCADA	Rockville	MD
Naomi Taffet, LCSW	Director of Service Coordination	CHANA - Counseling, Helpline & Aid Network for Abused Women in Baltimore	Baltimore	MD

Domestic Violence Program Interviewees

Name	Position	Organization	City	State
Elizabeth Schon Vainer, MS	Director	Journey to Safety, The Domestic Abuse Program of JF&CS	Boston	MA
Sammie Rosenbloom, LMSW	JCADA Coordinator	JCADA, Jewish Family Service Metro Detroit	Detroit	MI
Shari Bloomberg, PhD, LCSW	Clinical Director, Domestic Violence Services	Rachel Coalition at Jewish Family Service Metro West	Essex and Morris Counties	NJ
Hindy Hecht, MA	Director of Operations & Community Services	OHEL Children's Home and Family Services	Brooklyn	NY
Nechama Bakst, LCSW	Senior Director, Family Violence Awareness Program	Met Council	New York	NY
Shoshannah Frydman, PhD, LCSW	Executive Director	Shalom Task Force	New York City	NY
Talya Sahler, LMSW	Coordinator for Orthodox Jewish Community	Project Tikvah, CSC	Rockland County	NY
Ariela Goldstein, LCSW	Senior Director, Clinical Services	Jewish Family Service	Dallas	TX
Kim Holland, MS	DV Advocacy Program Manager	Dvora Project, Jewish Family Services	Seattle	WA
Monte Jewel, JD	Staff Attorney	Dvora Project, Jewish Family Services	Seattle	WA

APPENDIX 5:

Clergy Interviewees

Clergy Interviewees

Name	Organization	Denomination	City	State
Cantor Ilana Axel	Beth Tikvah Congregation	Reform	Hoffman Estates	IL
Rabbi Joseph Ozarowski	JCFS Chicago	Orthodox	Skokie	IL
Rabbi Jonathan Rudnick	Jewish Family Services	Conservative	Prairie Village	KS
Rabbi Marla Hornsten	Temple Israel	Reform	West Bloomfield	MI
Rabbi Paul Yedwab	Temple Israel	Reform	West Bloomfield	MI
Rabbi Dan Aronson	Congregation Ahavas Achim	Reconstructionist	Keene	NH
Rabbi Donna Kirshbaum	Bethlehem Hebrew Congregation	Unaffiliated	Bethlehem	NH
Rabbi Mark Dratch	Rabbinical Council of America (RCA)	Orthodox	New York	NY

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Jewish Women International (JWI) is the leading Jewish organization working to empower women and girls by ensuring and protecting their safety, health, rights, and economic security; promoting and celebrating inter-generational leadership; and inspiring civic participation and community engagement. Inspired by our legacy of progressive women's leadership and guided by our Jewish values, JWI works to ensure that all women and girls – of every race, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability – thrive in healthy relationships, control their financial futures, and realize the full potential of their personal strength.

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