



CALIFORNIA  
**PARTNERSHIP TO END  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Together, We're Stronger.

**2025-2026**

# **POLICY AGENDA**



# INTRODUCTION



Domestic violence is when someone uses coercion and violence to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It is a pattern of behavior with a range of escalating abusive tactics: psychological, emotional, sexual, financial, legal, spiritual, and physical, as well as stalking and threatening.<sup>1</sup> Domestic violence affects millions of Californians every year, and the impacts of violence and abuse can be wide reaching. This violence and abuse causes profound impacts to victims' physical and mental health. 42% of women who experienced physical or sexual violence experienced injuries. Depression is twice as likely in women exposed to intimate partner violence.<sup>2</sup> More data about the prevalence and impact of domestic violence is available in [the Partnership's fact sheet here](#).

Supporting survivors and families in healing from violence requires attention to a survivor's physical safety, economic stability, housing access, and more. We must also continue to focus on prevention efforts to stop violence from ever occurring and build a healthy, safe future for California. This two-year policy agenda intends to address multiple structural and systemic factors which contribute to domestic violence, and the intersectional nature of our priorities positions our work alongside other social justice movements. Our policy work combines strategic leadership, where we center solutions to the impacts of domestic violence, with strategic allyship, where we stand in solidarity with allied causes. We are committed to advancing real solutions that promote safety as well as healing with a holistic approach.

# AT A GLANCE:

## Goals for the January 2025 - September 2026 California Legislative Session



1. Ensure stable funding for crime victim services, especially through federal advocacy to stabilize the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and state budget advocacy to provide backfill funding for continuing VOCA shortfalls.
2. Respond to the shifting federal landscape to defend against harmful policy changes and funding reductions that would jeopardize survivor safety and prevention efforts through work at both the federal and state levels.
3. Establish a new funding approach for prevention efforts.
4. Reduce the negative impact of the child welfare system on survivors and their children.
5. Improve housing security for survivors through both legislative and systems advocacy.



# PRIORITY POLICY ADVOCACY ISSUE AREAS

## **Funding Survivor Services and Prevention Efforts**

Domestic violence service providers need ample and stable funding in order to fully serve their communities. We work to ensure that funding is available and easily accessible for all providers.

### **Prevention**

Domestic violence is not inevitable and can be prevented before it occurs. Our policy work focuses on securing ongoing funding for prevention, a necessary first step toward building a foundation for prevention across California. Additional prevention policy work includes efforts to increase access to healthy relationship education for youth, and increase access to paid leave systems to reduce economic stress and reduce violence, and better equip healthcare systems to support survivors.

### **Housing & Homelessness**

Survivors and their families deserve safe, stable, and affordable housing. When survivors do experience homelessness, housing discrimination, and unaffordable housing, our state's systems must respond in ways that address their specific needs.

### **Economic Justice**

Economic stability is central to healing for survivors and their families, and can protect against violence from ever occurring. Our policy work strives to create opportunities for survivors to experience stability and thrive financially, and

includes collaborative work with social justice partners to increase the economic well-being for all Californians.

## **Addressing the Criminal Legal System**

Survivors deserve the right to access safety, support, and resources without being required to engage with our criminal legal system unless they choose to do so. Recognizing that many survivors do not want to engage with this system and the harms that many experience when forced to do so, we support the development of alternative approaches to survivor safety and efforts to reduce systemic reliance on the criminal system to address domestic violence. For survivors who do choose to engage with the criminal legal system, we work to ensure they receive equitable, appropriate responses.

## **Advocacy at the Intersections**

We support policy change to advance reproductive justice, promote immigrant justice, support Native communities, and end gun violence. Survivors' identities are intersectional, and the work to end domestic violence must include work across social justice movements. Our efforts to create a world free of oppression where all people are able to thrive are deeply connected.

The following pages provide more details about the breadth and depth of the Policy Team's work on each priority issue area.



# FUNDING SURVIVOR SERVICES & PREVENTION EFFORTS

Addressing domestic violence requires ample stable funding and resources. Domestic violence service providers rely on a fragmented system of federal, state, local and private funding to provide essential, life-saving services to their community. Funding often comes with burdensome administrative requirements that shifts time and resources away from their work to support survivors and their families, and funding consistently falls short of the true need. Prevention funding remains scarce, with no ongoing state general fund support and strict limitations on utilizing federal funds for prevention. With full funding and reduced administrative barriers, domestic violence programs can better implement responsive, community-based programs that meet the needs of those they serve.

1. Advocate for stabilization of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding at the federal level and state funding to backfill any federal shortfalls.
2. Support the implementation of AB 2432 (Gabriel), which established a new state-level funding source for crime victim services.
3. Establish a new approach to funding for prevention efforts.
4. Advocate for increases in federal funding through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and supporting the development of new funding specific to communities of color, culturally specific organizations, and traditionally unserved/underserved communities.
5. Protect current state general funds for domestic violence services.
6. Support legislation to improve nonprofit-government contracting processes to reduce barriers to funding and ease administrative barriers on programs.
7. Increase the inclusion of domestic violence service providers in homelessness funding opportunities.
8. Advise Cal OES on funding priorities and implementation through Partnership staff participation on the Domestic Violence Advisory Council (DVAC), VAWA STOP Committee, and VOCA Steering Committee.





# PREVENTION



Limited, one-time, inconsistent funding dedicated to prevention work has made it challenging for organizations to sustain long-term work within their communities. With higher funding levels and the stability of consistent funds, prevention work can flourish statewide. Our prevention policy goals also include ensuring that California's youth have access to education about how to form healthy relationships to reduce the prevalence of dating and domestic violence for these generations and includes supporting youth of all genders and addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ youth. We also work to increase economic security for families as a protective factor against abuse by expanding access to paid leave programs. Our work also includes partnering with healthcare systems and public health partners to promote prevention.

1. Establish a new approach to funding for prevention efforts.
2. Follow up on legislative recommendations that emerge from the California State Auditor's audit of school district implementation of the California Healthy Youth Act.
3. Expand and improve access to California's Paid Family Leave program, paid sick and safe days, and support additional policy changes to increase economic stability for families. The Partnership undertakes this work as an active member of the [California Work & Family Coalition](#), a statewide alliance of community organizations, unions, non-profits, and individuals dedicated to helping parents, caregivers, and families thrive.



# HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

Safe, stable housing is an essential component for survivors' well-being and can provide a survivor with the ability to heal from the experience of abuse. Housing insecurity is a primary reason why survivors across genders and age ranges stay in abusive relationships and why children continue to be exposed to domestic violence - a key risk factor for future perpetration and chronic health conditions. According to the National Center on Family Homelessness, 57% of homeless women report domestic violence as the immediate cause of their homelessness.<sup>3</sup> Unstable housing and homelessness increase the vulnerability to new forms of violence for survivors' and their children, creating a still greater risk that the cycle of violence will continue into new generations.

Addressing housing instability includes looking at short-term and long-term options for survivors to attain safe housing. The current high costs of housing impede survivors' efforts to return to housing, with nearly 95% of survivors who participated in the California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness indicated that high housing costs were a barrier to returning to permanent housing.<sup>4</sup> Our policy work includes efforts to ensure that California's homelessness funding and systems respond to the specific needs of survivors and will focus on solutions that support survivors in finding and maintaining safe, stable housing.

1. Secure survivor-specific access to housing, including funding for emergency vouchers, Domestic Violence Housing First, increasing the availability of long-term rental subsidies and affordable housing, and other approaches.
2. Support legislation to address barriers that keep survivors from being safely and stably housed, including low credit scores, high security deposits, and Fair Market Rent calculations.
3. Provide training and technical assistance for programs to effectively advocate for the needs of survivors to their local Continuums of Care, City Councils, or Boards of Supervisors.
4. Improve the state's homelessness planning and responses to ensure domestic violence survivors are fully included. This work includes implementation of SB 914 (Rubio, 2022).
5. Shift the narrative to increase understanding about the intersection of domestic violence with housing insecurity and homelessness, to position survivors and service providers as central to policy responses.
6. Expand and deepen collaboration with local movements and advocates, county, state, and national housing, and homelessness agencies.
7. Facilitate and participate in the [Housing Opportunities Mean Everything \(HOME\) Cohort](#) of domestic violence programs, funded through the Women's Foundation California to focus on improved system outcomes for survivors experiencing homelessness.



# ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Survivors and families experiencing domestic violence deserve a solid financial foundation and the ability to build wealth and economic freedom. Financial abuse occurs in 99% of domestic violence cases<sup>5</sup> and the debt and poor credit score resulting from financial abuse can have long-term consequences for survivors, creating barriers to education, housing and employment opportunities. Access to economic resources is the most likely predictor of whether a survivor will be able to permanently separate from their abusive partner.<sup>6</sup> In addition to being a central component of well-being for survivors and their families, increasing economic security for families can act as a protective factor to reduce the likelihood of abuse ever occurring.

1. Collaborate with anti-poverty programs to address access to public benefits.
2. Support the implementation of [SB 975 \(Min., 2022\)](#) to provide survivors with relief from coerced debt.
3. As an active member of the [Work & Family Coalition](#), advocate for paid leave policies to help survivors, individuals, parents, and families have the time and resources to care for themselves and each other.
4. Serve as a [Stronger California](#) steering committee member and actively support the coalition priorities to combat poverty and build assets, achieve workplace justice and family-friendly workplaces, and expand access to affordable, quality child care.
5. Participate on the [California Victim Compensation Board \(CalVCB\)](#) Advisory Committee.



# ADDRESSING THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

In order to achieve safety and healing for all survivors and their families, we must develop alternatives to the criminal legal system. The Partnership is committed to supporting de-centering criminal legal responses in favor of survivor & community-led solutions to prevent and end domestic violence. This section of our policy agenda focuses on supporting the development of alternative responses and accountability by those who commit harm without relying on a carceral response. We also seek to eliminate ways in which survivors are forced to engage with the criminal system when they would otherwise choose not to, in order to provide survivors with true choices. We recognize that too often survivors themselves are criminalized, and our priorities include working to improve how our systems respond to the needs of these survivors.

1. Support the advancement of alternatives to the current law enforcement response.
2. Advance solutions to the harms survivors and their children experience when involved with the child welfare system, including addressing the issue of failure to protect.
3. Support legislative efforts that address the needs of criminalized survivors.
4. Oppose increased criminalization efforts.
5. Support changes to eliminate requirements for survivors to engage with the criminal system to access needed safety and benefits, including access to Victim Compensation.



# ADVOCACY AT THE INTERSECTIONS

We are committed to supporting policy change that advances reproductive justice, immigrant justice, supports Native communities, LGBTQ+ survivors, and ends gun violence. We recognize that survivors' identities are intersectional, and the work to end domestic violence must include work across social justice movements. Our efforts to create a world free of oppression where all people are able to thrive are deeply connected.



- 1. Reproductive justice:** Ending violence in California and beyond must include working to protect everyone's human rights, including the rights to have full autonomy over our bodies; to have or not have children; to birth and/or parent our children with dignity; and to live and/or raise a family in a safe, healthy environment. Many survivors who experience intimate partner violence also experience reproductive and sexual coercion.<sup>7</sup> An estimated 20% of pregnant partners experience violence during their pregnancy, and the likelihood of physical violence increases 2-4x if the pregnancy is unintended.<sup>8</sup> The leading cause of death among pregnant people is homicide, especially for Black women.<sup>9</sup>
- 2. Immigrant justice:** Our immigration laws create barriers to safety for survivors, who often lack the resources needed to leave an abusive relationship as the result of systemic barriers, lack of language access, social isolation, and lack of financial resources. As a tactic of control, people who cause harm often use their partners' immigration status and fear of deportation to continue the abuse. Our work includes advocacy for policies that support survivors' safety and ability to remain in their communities.
- 3. Supporting Native communities:** Indigenous people are far more likely to experience violent crimes compared to other ethnicities, and more than 80% of Indigenous women experience violence in their lifetimes.<sup>10</sup>

We will work in coalition with Native tribes and communities to support Native led solutions for safety and security including addressing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People crisis.

- 4. Supporting LGBTQ+ survivors:** LGBTQ+ communities experience domestic violence at higher rates compared to their cisgender and heterosexual peers. LGBTQ+ survivors of intimate partner violence face significant barriers and discrimination that limit their ability to access inclusive and affirming services and to feel safe when interacting with institutional responses such as law enforcement and the court system. Transgender and nonbinary individuals are at higher risk of domestic violence and sexual assault due to the discrimination, stigma, and barriers to financial and housing security that the transgender community experiences. Transgender women of color are especially impacted. Transgender people are also three times more likely to experience homelessness than their cisgender lesbian, gay, and bisexual counterparts, and eight times more likely than cisgender heterosexual people. We will work with LGBTQ+ partners to support policy efforts to address the specific needs of LGBTQ+ communities.

- 5. Ending gun violence:** When firearms are present in a situation where domestic violence is being perpetrated, a survivor is more likely to experience an increase in severe physical abuse, and more likely to end up killed than in situations where firearms are not present. A person who causes harm's access to a firearm poses a serious threat to victims, making it five times more likely that a survivor will be killed.<sup>11</sup> In total, a firearm is used in over half of domestic violence homicides nationwide.<sup>12</sup> Within these devastating statistics are significant racial disparities. Black women are twice as likely to be shot and killed by an intimate partner in comparison to white women.<sup>13</sup> Our work includes collaboration with partners in the movement to prevent gun violence to strengthen California's legal protections to reduce the presence of firearms in these dangerous situations. The Partnership is also committed to increasing survivors', communities', and advocates' understanding about tools to reduce gun violence, and has developed a toolkit and resources on this issue, [available here](#).



# ENDNOTES

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