

# How do mandatory reporting laws affect help-seeking among survivors of intimate partner violence?

LIPPY, C., JUMARALI, S. N., NNAWULEZI, N. A., WILLIAMS, E. P., & BURK, C. (2019). THE IMPACT OF MANDATORY REPORTING LAWS ON SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: INTERSECTIONALITY, HELP-SEEKING, AND THE NEED FOR CHANGE. *JOURNAL OF FAMILY VIOLENCE*.

## What can we learn from this study?

For individuals experiencing intimate partner violence, seeking support is essential. However, the presence of mandatory reporting laws may dissuade survivors from accessing supports for fear of negative repercussions, in part due to concerns that their children will be removed from their care. This study describes the impacts of mandatory reporting laws on survivors' help-seeking behaviors and consequences of reports that were made on their behalf.

### Study details:

- **Population:** 2,462 survivors of intimate partner violence seeking help through the National Domestic Violence Hotline's chat services
- **Data source:** Online survey administered to survivors
- **Methodology:** Qualitative and quantitative analyses (including descriptive statistics, chi-square analyses, and multivariate logistic regression)
- **Dates:** Six weeks during Spring 2015

## What are the critical findings?

Although the article discussed perceived repercussions in a variety of areas, this summary focuses on the impact in child protection. Some studies have found that child removal is more likely when cases include domestic violence, and that Black families experiencing intimate partner violence face child removal at a disproportionately high rate.

- **35% of respondents did not ask for help from at least one person because of mandatory reporting laws.** Survivors reported that they did not ask for help from a friend or family member (29%), a medical or mental health care provider (28%), or police (9%) because they were concerned that the information would be reported to CPS.
- **Survivors feared CPS would take away their children.** Qualitative results showed that, second to criminal legal involvement, CPS involvement—including child removal—was a common fear related to mandatory reporting.
- **When CPS became involved because of mandatory reporting, survivors described negative experiences.** Qualitative results showed that CPS involvement resulted in negative outcomes, including removal of children.

## Why is this important for our work?

Although mandatory reporting laws were created to protect vulnerable populations, their implementation can create unintended consequences and result in survivors being less likely to seek help. In light of this and other research evidence, it may be helpful to revisit mandatory reporting laws related to intimate partner violence, and develop alternative ways to protect and support survivors.

This summary synthesizes the findings of a single research study. To learn more, please review [How can helplines serve as a better pathway for families to access supports?](#) and [What are some examples of real-time information sharing between child protection and law enforcement?](#)

For additional information, [see the abstract](#) or email [KMResources@casey.org](mailto:KMResources@casey.org).