



Beyond the Crisis: A Long-Term Approach to Reduce, Prevent, and Recover from Intimate Partner Violence

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Milton Marks Commission on California State
Government Organization and Economy

www.lhc.ca.gov

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The Little Hoover Commission, formally known as the Milton Marks "Little Hoover" Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy, is an independent state oversight agency.

By statute, the Commission is a bipartisan board composed of five public members appointed by the governor, four public members appointed by the Legislature, two senators and two assemblymembers.

In creating the Commission in 1962, the Legislature declared its purpose:

...to secure assistance for the Governor and itself in promoting economy, efficiency and improved services in the transaction of the public business in the various departments, agencies and instrumentalities of the executive branch of the state government, and in making the operation of all state departments, agencies and instrumentalities, and all expenditures of public funds, more directly responsive to the wishes of the people as expressed by their elected representatives...

The Commission fulfills this charge by listening to the public, consulting with the experts and conferring with the wise. In the course of its investigations, the Commission typically empanels advisory committees, conducts public hearings and visits government operations in action.

Its conclusions are submitted to the Governor and the Legislature for their consideration. Recommendations often take the form of legislation, which the Commission supports through the legislative process.

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Letter from the Chair

January 11, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Speaker pro Tempore of the Senate
and members of the Senate

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
and members of the Assembly

The Honorable Shannon Grove
Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable Marie Waldron
Assembly Minority Leader

DEAR GOVERNOR AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE:

Since late 2019, the Little Hoover Commission has examined California's response to intimate partner violence, a horrific form of abuse that has a tragic and lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities throughout our state. The following report concludes our review and details steps the state must take to strengthen its response to this violence.

Although numerous state agencies have an impact on those affected by intimate partner violence, the Commission found that California lacks a coordinated, cohesive strategy to prevent this abuse and support survivors with their long-term needs. The state's current approach is siloed and suffers from critical gaps in services and funding that make it difficult for survivors to access the resources they need to escape their abuser and establish a life on their own.

Greater action must be taken to ensure California responds rigorously and effectively to this abhorrent abuse. In this report, the Commission recommends the state transition to a holistic, strategic, evidence-based, and collaborative approach that helps Californians reduce, prevent, and recover from intimate partner violence.

The Commission respectfully submits this work and stands prepared to help you address this challenge.

Sincerely,

Pedro Nava, Chair
Little Hoover Commission

■ Executive Summary

California must transform its response to intimate partner violence from a focus on crisis intervention to one of prevention and early intervention.

The Little Hoover Commission began studying California's response to intimate partner violence in late 2019. In May 2020, the Commission released its first report on the topic, [Intimate Partner Violence: Getting Money to Those on the Front Line](#), which asked the Governor and Legislature to provide grant funding upfront to service providers.

This second report focuses on the organization of California's response to intimate partner violence. The Commission hopes this report will serve as a stepping stone to the state's transition to a holistic, strategic, evidence-based, and collaborative approach to help Californians reduce, prevent, and recover from intimate partner violence. The findings in this report fall into four categories: Governance, Prevention and Early Intervention, Firearms, and Economic Security.

Governance

The Commission believes there must be a statewide strategy to reduce, prevent, and recover from intimate partner violence, and that there must be a leader accountable for progress. Currently, the state suffers from a siloed approach that results in critical gaps in the state's response. Most of our resources, for example, are directed toward crisis intervention instead of prevention and early intervention.

In response to these findings, the Commission recommends the Governor and Legislators:

- Adopt a strategic approach to intimate partner violence that is focused on prevention and early intervention, while continuing to support crisis intervention and victim services.
- Appoint a leader who will be accountable for progress on the state's strategy. Among other responsibilities, this leader should bring

stakeholders together to craft the state's strategy; create a data collection and analysis framework and ensure service providers receive grant funding for this purpose; modernize processes; facilitate expertise within state government on intimate partner violence; ensure underserved groups are prioritized within the plan; and design a funding framework that will advance the state's goals.

Prevention and Early Intervention

California does not have a substantial prevention or early intervention program. The state should create and adequately fund prevention and early intervention programs, and ensure that these initiatives are included in all applicable statewide strategic plans ranging from early childhood education to reducing homelessness.

The state has a rigid approach to batterer intervention programs. The state's requirements do not meet the needs for those of modest means, who do not speak English, live in rural areas, and many other people. The state should review its requirements for batterer intervention programs to determine if they facilitate rehabilitation and ensure those programs are available to individuals who cannot afford them.

Firearms

California must enforce its firearms laws and ensure that firearms immediately are removed from people prohibited from owning them. The Commission identified some challenges that prevent the state from doing that. One is that the databases from which the list of people prohibited from owning firearms is drawn need to be modernized. Currently, there is no way for the system to automatically crosscheck registered firearms against people who are prohibited from owning them. Another is that the state lacks the personnel to lead these efforts.

California is not a competitive employer: It requires its special agents to hold college degrees yet pays less than other agencies that do not require a degree. Its hiring process also can take 12 months, which is too long for many to wait.

The state should enforce existing firearms laws by speeding up IT modernization and reworking the special agent classification to be more competitive.

Economic Security

It is imperative for survivors to be economically secure: Intimate partner violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women. The primary reason women return to abusive partners is economic insecurity. Further, many survivors experience economic abuse in their relationship, which can destroy their finances and credit. To help survivors leave and support themselves, the state should:

- Create a one-stop identity and financial program to help survivors start over.
- Transition the Victim Compensation Board model for state funds from one of reimbursement to real-time payments.
- Officially recognize domestic violence survivors as a group facing barriers to employment.
- Connect survivors with state apprenticeship programs so they may earn a living while completing their education or training.
- Require all state-administered domestic violence grants to provide a living wage and annual cost-of-living increases to awardees.
- Advertise its CalWORKS emergency housing program for survivors and adjust it to be more flexible for survivors needs.
- Expand its Domestic Violence Housing First program, create a stable, sustainable funding stream, and require awardees to participate in monitoring and evaluation.

- Include domestic violence experts in its policymaking processes for homelessness and housing instability.

■ Introduction

One third of women in California will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime.¹ So will one quarter of men. Rates are even higher for those who are transgender: Approximately 54 percent of transgender people nationwide experience IPV during their lifetime.²

Intimate partner violence starts young: 70 percent of women and girls who experience intimate partner violence and 55 percent of men and boys who experience it first do so by age 24. And of those young people, nearly a quarter of girls and 15 percent of boys first experience it before they've reached adulthood.³

The effects follow victims for life. Young women who experience IPV are more likely to drop out of school than their non-abused peers. A study on women in vocational training found that those who experienced psychological violence were five times more likely to drop out of the program than their peers.⁴ And when abused women enter the workforce, one study found they earn a dollar less per hour than their non-abused peers.⁵ A Pennsylvania study found that domestic violence victims in that state earned 88 cents for every dollar their non-abused peers earned.⁶

Unsurprisingly, abused women experience physical and mental health disorders at higher rates than non-abused women, and their health care costs are 42 percent higher than those of non-abused women.⁷ They cannot escape higher healthcare costs even if they leave their abuser: Women who have lived in abuse-free situations for five years or longer still face health care costs that are 19 percent higher than their non-abused peers.⁸

Often the impact falls hardest on the most vulnerable. Families experiencing economic stress are particularly likely to be affected by IPV,⁹ and there is a correlation between male unemployment and rates of domestic violence.¹⁰ Women who live in small rural towns are more likely to experience IPV, and

What is Intimate Partner Violence?

Intimate partner violence occurs when someone harms a person with whom they currently or previously shared an emotionally or physically intimate relationship. This abuse can be physical, sexual, psychological, or financial; often it is a combination of these.

The full scope of intimate partner violence was only recently codified in California statute when the Legislature enacted, and Governor Newsom signed, SB 1141 in September 2020. Sponsored by the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office and introduced by Senator Susan Rubio, the bill expands the definition of domestic violence to include coercive control. The law defines coercive control as behavior that unreasonably interferes with someone's free will and personal liberty, and includes actions such as isolating victims, depriving them of necessities, controlling their movement, communications, behavior, finances, economic resources, or access to services, and forcing or intimidating them into actions they otherwise would not take.¹¹

The Commission applauds the state's leaders and the LA City Attorney's office for this recognition, albeit belated, of common ways victims are controlled. It is too soon to know whether the statute is working as intended, but it is something the Commission will follow with interest and may address in future reports if necessary.

more severe forms of IPV, than women living in other locations, and they are more likely to suffer extensive property damage and be murdered by their partner than women in other geographic areas.¹² Both

women and men who are American Indian, black, or multiracial report higher rates of intimate partner violence than their peers of other races.¹³

Finally, we must not forget the toll on California's public servants and their families: 40 percent of law enforcement officer homicides nationwide occur while responding to domestic violence calls. Domestic violence calls are the most lethal call for our police officers.¹⁴

Intimate Partner Violence is Costly to the State

In addition to the human cost, intimate partner violence exacts a heavy burden on taxpayers through medical, criminal justice, property damage, and other costs. RAND published a study on the 2007 cost of different crimes to Los Angeles County: In 2019 dollars, each murder cost Los Angeles \$10.9 million; each rape cost \$276,000; and each physical assault cost \$110,500.¹⁵ A 2010 study by the University of Colorado School of Public Health and the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine had similar findings: Each murder cost society approximately \$9 million, while the average cost of a non-sexual assault was about \$107,000.¹⁶

Funded by the California Department of Public Health and the CDC, the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) published the most comprehensive study on the tangible and intangible costs of sexual violence to California. This is important because, according to the CDC, 51 percent of female rape victims are raped by a current or former partner.¹⁷

The study found that the annual tangible cost for sexual assaults in California is \$9 billion. Tangible costs include health care, property damage, investigation and adjudication of the incident, and other costs resulting from the crime. \$2.9 billion of that is funded by taxpayers to pay for police, courts,

jails and prisons, sex offender management, and other public services – and this figure doesn't include other costs paid by society, such as increases in insurance premiums.¹⁸

Intangible costs include items such as the income and tax revenue lost while the victim was recovering; the perpetrator's income and tax revenue lost while in prison; the costs to an employer of hiring and training a temporary worker if the victim was off of work for an extended time; and similar important, but less visible, costs.¹⁹

Researchers calculated – and believe it to be a conservative calculation – the intangible costs to California for sexual assault to be \$140 billion per year.²⁰

Sexual violence is but one of the many types of abuse victims of intimate partner violence experience. The State of California simply cannot afford to allow domestic partner violence to run unchecked.

California's Response to Intimate Partner Violence: Underfunded, Fragmented, and Incomplete

California's response to intimate partner violence contains pockets of success. The state contributes funding toward a network of nonprofit organizations that provide a wide variety of services to survivors. Expanded services are available for low-income survivors, and home visits provide parents with information about intimate partner violence. An innovative program called Domestic Violence Housing First provides survivors with flexible funding to ensure they have housing. All of these programs are administered by dedicated civil servants who impressed the Commission as talented and devoted to serving vulnerable Californians.

But we believe more must be done. We believe

the state's current effort is both underfunded and administratively fragmented.

The state relies heavily on the federal government for funding its response to intimate partner violence, which means the money is used for the federal government's priorities. Each year the federal government sends the state approximately \$300 million for various programs related to intimate partner violence: \$260 million to help victims, \$16 million for victim compensation services, \$16 million from the Violence Against Women Act, and \$10 million for prevention programs.

California adds only about \$20 million a year toward crisis intervention victim services.²¹ Traditionally there has been almost no additional state funding of prevention. In 2019-20 and 2020-21, the state appropriated \$5 million toward sexual and domestic violence prevention – a meager amount that nonetheless initially was cut from the 2020-21 budget and advocates had to fight to get reinstated.²²

Agency Silos Lead to Overlaps and Critical Gaps in Service Provision

While dozens of state agencies address various aspects of intimate partner violence, the two that lead the state's response are the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS) and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES).

CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Cal OES is the primary administrator of federal funding for direct services to victims. It inherited this responsibility after the Legislature shut down the Office of Criminal Justice Planning. Thereafter, the Legislature tasked Cal OES with creating a comprehensive statewide domestic violence program with three goals:

- Provide local assistance to existing service providers.
- Maintain and expand services based on a demonstrated need.
- Establish a targeted or directed program for the development and establishment of domestic violence services in currently unserved and underserved areas.²³

In response, Cal OES created the Domestic Violence Assistance Program (DVAP). About 60 percent of DVAP funding comes from federal funds. The other 40 percent comes from the state's only direct contribution to IPV-related services: \$20.6 million from California's General Fund. When creating the program, Cal OES and the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (The Partnership) engaged in an extensive stakeholder process to determine how to use the funding. The result was a decision to bring the existing shelter providers to an equal level of funding, and then divide the DVAP funds equally among them, regardless of size, location, needs of client population, or other factors. Each of the roughly 100 organizations receiving DVAP funding currently receives approximately \$500,000 per year.

CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

The California Health and Human Services Agency contains offices and departments critical to reducing and preventing intimate partner violence:

OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL

Upon taking office, Governor Newsom created the Office of the Surgeon General and appointed Dr. Nadine Burke-Harris as the state's first Surgeon General. Her mandate is daunting: She is to "advise the Governor, serve as a leading spokesperson on matters of public health and marshal the insights and energy of medical professionals, scientists, public health experts, public servants and everyday Californians to drive solutions to our most pressing public health challenges."²⁴ Dr. Burke-Harris is exceptionally qualified to lead the state in reducing

and preventing intimate partner violence: Her background focuses on the long-term impact of adverse childhood experiences and she has set a goal to reduce such experiences by half in one generation.²⁵

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The California Department of Social Services offers expanded services for low-income survivors through its CalWORKS program, as well as emergency assistance for survivors from higher-income backgrounds whose abuser is restricting their access to resources. This will be discussed in more detail in Part III of this report. The department also runs its Home Visiting Program via CalWORKS; this program sends nurses or other professionals to visit parents or soon-to-be parents to answer questions and connect them with other social services if needed. One of the areas in which they assist parents is with support services for domestic violence.²⁶ Multiple stakeholders praised this program and suggested expanding it as a means of reducing and preventing intimate partner violence.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The California Department of Public Health leads California's prevention efforts for all types of violence, including intimate partner violence, through its Violence Prevention Initiative. The agency focuses on addressing the root causes of violence, such as poverty, housing, health equity, and other far-reaching topics, but has a small partnership with Cal OES to provide teen dating violence services. This provides direct assistance to young people in violent relationships or at risk of being in a violent relationship. The program is designed to intervene with young victims and perpetrators to prevent unhealthy relationships in the future. Out of the more than 10,500 public and charter schools in California, however, this joint program serves only four.²⁷

Both the Department of Public Health and Cal OES direct funding to provide crisis services to victims,

and both work on prevention. Neither, however, serves the critical area between prevention and crisis intervention: early intervention, or interrupting the cycle of abuse before it reaches a crisis stage. Ultimately, California's most vulnerable residents pay the price for this siloed arrangement of government responsibilities.

Create a Holistic Prevention- and Early-Intervention Approach to Intimate Partner Violence

California must adopt a more holistic approach to solve its domestic violence problem. Many survivors are in crisis by the time they reach out for help. While the state must continue – and bolster – its support for victim services, it must take on the difficult work of prevention and early intervention before the crisis arrives.

Currently, no one is responsible for state's progress or lack thereof on reducing and preventing intimate partner violence. The Governor must designate someone who will “own” the issue area of intimate partner violence. The Commission believes the purview logically would fall under the California Health and Human Services Agency, but ultimately this leader must be someone the Governor and Legislature trust, is committed to evidence-based decision-making, and can elicit the cooperation of leaders across every level of government, as well as the nonprofit and private sectors. There are several steps this leader should take:

Bring stakeholders together to develop the state's goals for intimate partner violence, identify metrics to measure progress toward those goals, and craft an evidence-based strategy to reach the goals.

The state should define success. Currently the state lacks a definition of success, as Jeanne Spurr, CEO of

Empower Tehama, pointed out. “What is success?” she asked. “For some it’s divorce, for others it’s housing. Everybody’s definition is different, so how do you measure it?”²⁸

To facilitate evidence-based decision-making, create a framework for data collection and analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the methods it is using to combat intimate partner violence. The leader must not be afraid to change course if the evidence indicates current methods are not working. Importantly, the state must include funding in its grants for organizations to hire a data manager or analyst.

The state needs more accurate data to successfully address intimate partner violence. The state does not have a firm grasp of the full scope and impact of intimate partner violence on Californians who are not cisgender white women and whether it is meeting their needs – though conversations with advocates from those communities suggest it is not. It does not even know the effectiveness of its mainstream programs for survivors of intimate partner violence.

That does not mean that grantees do not have reporting requirements, however. They do, and it’s cumbersome. Below is testimony from Beth Hassett, CEO and Executive Director for WEAVE, a Sacramento-based crisis intervention organization, on the reporting burden for grants administered by Cal OES:

The amount of data we are expected to provide to the government is excessive and redundant. Cal OES requires semi- annual progress reports that are a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data. That’s 13 grants x 2 progress reports a year = 26 reports. Some of them vary in length, but none is less than 4 pages and the DV progress report is 11 pages long.

In addition, any of our Cal OES grants with VOCA funding (10 total) also require quarterly data

reports to be submitted directly to the feds via the OVC PMT website (a very problematic, onerous system that never functions as it’s supposed to); so that’s 10 grants x 4 reports/year = 40. So Cal OES alone is requiring us to submit 66 reports/year.

The time needed to prepare the progress reports vary by grant, but an average of 1.5 days is required to complete (12 hours if that’s all you were working on that day). The VOCA reports take about 2 hours each and that’s using our very robust, very expensive client data system, Efforts to Outcomes, that already has the report built in it. I can’t imagine how much time it takes smaller agencies who are relying on Excel spreadsheets or lesser database solutions.

So now we’re talking roughly 450 hours each year just to complete the reporting requirements for Cal OES [...] The biggest aggravation is that the information being reported is duplicated in the various reports, but each entity (Cal OES, VOCA, FVPSA, etc.) all ask for the information to be reported in a different way--different quarters, different funding periods, etc.--so it’s not like we can just copy and paste the information. Additionally, we rarely receive feedback on the reports we submit, unless there’s an error or a correction needed. It would be beneficial to know how the information is being used to inform future funding needs, etc.”²⁹

Ms. Hassett’s frustrations were echoed by Matt Huckabay, Executive Director for Placerville-based The Center for Violence-Free Relationships, who used a single metric to illustrate the futility of current data reporting requirements:

One example of the problem with this type of reporting is evident with the question: total number of crisis line calls received. The assumption is every crisis line call being counted is from a person in a crisis that is specific to domestic violence. This is not the case. Every day individuals call The Center’s

A Voice for the Underserved

The state's current shelter system, it is often said, was designed by white women for white women. This is not quite accurate, said Beckie Masaki, co-founder of the Asian Women's Shelter in San Francisco. If you look at who initially founded various women's shelters, she said, you'll find that several were started by women of color, often survivors themselves. As with many other social services, the shelters were subsumed into the dominant cultural framework and came to serve the needs of white able-bodied cisgender American women, leaving others underserved or not served at all.³⁰ Here it is best to allow service providers to speak for themselves and the populations they serve:

"A lot of times [survivors] mothers are living with them and can become scapegoats themselves, with violence directed at them. Often, domestic violence shelters won't allow [a survivor's] mother to come." – **Beckie Masaki, Co-founder of the Asian Women's Shelter**³¹

"The Korean community is low-reporting of domestic violence because of cultural, lingual, and stigma barriers. Clients fear going into an environment where they can't speak to anyone. Uprooting children is a huge issue because the community is education-oriented. By the time clients are willing to choose shelter, the violence and abuse has gotten so bad that there aren't other options – there's no early intervention then, just serving people at a crisis level." – **Connie Chung Joe, Executive Director, Korean American Family Services** (title at time of conversation)³²

"Police officers are supposed to bring a [sign language] interpreter. Often, it's not the officer's fault – there may be no interpreters in the area or there may be too few resources. In one situation, the officer showed up and actually arrested the survivor and son, who were both victims, and put them in jail. The police notes were that they refused to communicate. It caused a lot of harm to the victims. [...] Shelters in the Bay Area are sometimes full or can't meet survivors' needs. Many shelters don't have a video phone device for deaf people. It would be helpful if all shelters could have a video phone." – **Everett Glenn, Empowerment Director, Deaf Hope**³³

*"Our wish list... Interpreters who are fluent in English and the language that is needed, and for them to be very informed. There have been times where we have used interpreters and they flat out refuse to interpret something because they're talking about sexual violence or domestic violence. The interpreter will say they don't believe what the victim is saying and refuse to interpret it. Or will say their culture doesn't allow it. There are others who don't know the jargon and don't know how to interpret. In the Hmong community, there isn't a word for domestic violence. In the 20 years that advocates have been working on Hmong domestic violence, advocates have coined a term. Some interpreters refuse to use that term, which means 'to torture.' But when talking to survivors and advocates, survivors will say no other word describes what they're going through except for this word. Some people will refuse to accurately translate that or use appropriate words. They will use terms like 'they just don't get along' instead of 'to torture.' For sexual violence, they won't say the word rape, just, 'that person did something bad to me.'" - **Maibao Yang, Program Specialist, and Dee Lee, Program Specialist, California Hmong Advocates Network – Building our Future**³⁴*

“The last census classified Arabs, as an ethnic group, as not low-income or needing help – that is our biggest problem. They consider our clients white and a population that does not need help, which affects grants. The state goes by the census and it’s a federal definition. My clients are North African and Middle Eastern. They are low-income, no-income, mostly women, and are in no shape or form of European descent. They come from an interdependent and collective society. People depend on each other, and religion and tradition is a big deal. Most are Muslim, and there is shame and stigma about divorce. And there is shame about what happens in the home and airing it. Because the system has been made for the European-descent mindset, it leaves out people who are very religious or think of religion as how they’re going to save themselves. The mosque and the church are where they will seek help. They won’t talk about their emotions and feelings to any therapist or advocate.” - Mouna Benmoussa, Program Director, Arab Women’s Services³⁵

“In the Bay, we see people who are hired who are bilingual and multilingual in all of these places where survivors interface. There are a lot of heritage speakers. People grew up speaking the language with family, but in the U.S. and have never talked about specific issues with courts, law enforcement, violence. The language issue is endless.” - Orchid Pusey, Executive Director, Asian Women’s Shelter³⁶

“A lot of problems on the reservation when it comes to violence are similar to issues in urban communities. We look at history, we look at the sexual abuse and violence against women with colonization, but it’s also continuing now. San Francisco ranks one of the highest in the nation for missing and murdered indigenous women. Funding is for tribes, but urban areas tend to be intertribal. Native women leave the reservation and come to urban communities to get away from their abuser, or to relocate for their job, and then they find themselves without services; sometimes they have to travel back to the reservation for services. [...] There’s a lot of cultural competency training that needs to happen with non-native organizations. Some women may want to speak to a native elder or go to a ceremony, and this is part of their healing. Women may want to think of something as part of their healing that may not be a western way of doing something. I’ve heard from survivors who have walked out of doctor or counseling appointments because they felt like they were having to retell their story, relive their trauma, and did not feel like they were believed or were being helped.” - April McGill, Director of Partnerships and Programs, California Consortium for Urban Indian Health³⁷

“The number one problem is rural access. We’re a pretty big county, 3,500 square miles but we have only 63,000 people. All of these people in outlying areas have to find their way in to one of the two cities. The only bus service runs from Corning to Red Bluff once per day. We need to provide services in geographically remote areas where abusers isolate their victims. Years ago I was director of a counseling center and we were doing a program on maternal health. The idea was to address maternal depression, provide wraparound services in these remote areas. As it turned out, there was a lot of abuse but they were so far out that no one knew about it. It’s critical to connect people to services in these rural and remote areas. Abuse against LGBTQ people is a really serious problem. We do some work with LGBTQ clients, but we don’t have a dedicated person who can work with that population.” - Jeanne Spurr, CEO, Empower Tehama³⁸

crisis line who are not experiencing IPV, may be calling the wrong number, as well as existing clients who need to reschedule an appointment or be reminded of the date of their next appointment. The result is The Center may report 832 crisis line calls received and it is possible 50% of those calls could be for concerns unrelated to IPV.³⁹

Mr. Huckabay eloquently described the consequences of just counting widgets instead of measuring the efficacy of services: “Organizations are not required to nor are they being held accountable for evaluating their ability to deliver meaningful, measurable and financially sustainable results for the people the organizations are in existence to serve.”⁴⁰

The Commission understands that many reporting requirements are set by the federal government and the state has little control over them. However, the process of creating a data collection and analysis framework should include streamlining the data reporting process to the extent possible and utilizing technology where possible. This includes ensuring the information the state collects for itself is not redundant with data already being supplied to the federal government, that grantees understand how that data is used to inform decision-making, and that grants include funding for a data manager for grantees. The Commission learned that across the nonprofit industry as a whole, 70 percent of funders want impact measurement data, while 71 percent of funders rarely or ever cover the costs of providing that data.⁴¹

Modernize processes with a focus on customer service.

The grant process could be easier for nonprofits operating on shoestring budgets if the state modernized how it does business with them. For example, the state should deposit funds directly into recipients’ accounts instead of mailing checks.

The state must design its processes with a focus on

customer service. It is easy to become consumed in bureaucracy and lose sight of the fact that the state is supposed to be serving the service providers.

Establish in-house expertise on intimate partner violence. Outside entities should be able to come to the state for information instead of the other way around.

As noted earlier, Cal OES relies on outside experts to inform its decisions on discretionary grant funding. By statute, Cal OES collaborates with the Domestic Violence Advisory Council (DVAC) on funding priorities and procedures. Members of the council, at least half of whom are victim advocates or service providers, include 13 voting members and two non-voting members appointed by the Governor, Assembly Speaker, and Senate Rules Committee. Cal OES also relies on advocates and technical assistance providers, such as when it hired the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence to design the stakeholder process that created the Domestic Violence Assistance Program.

To an extent, the Commission applauds Cal OES for listening to stakeholders and working with the experts beyond what is required by statute. They set an example for all government agencies. But the state must develop its own expertise on intimate partner violence within its borders. The state has to consider many things beyond the scope of any one organization or type of organization working with or advocating for victims of domestic violence. The state must make difficult decisions on how to spend limited resources, where allocating a dollar to one area means removing a dollar from somewhere else where it is desperately needed. It must consider taxpayer stewardship. It must consider how to rehabilitate offenders who often have their own unaddressed trauma. It must consider legislative and gubernatorial priorities – such as earlier this year where the legislative priority was Covid-19 response. It must consider fairness and equality: Does it send

its money to urban centers where many people can be helped or does it direct it to rural areas where help can be nonexistent?

Advocates, no matter how knowledgeable or desirous to help, cannot provide the full scope of information state officials need to make these decisions. If the state is to be truly committed to evidence-based decision making, then it needs its own evidence and its own thorough understanding of how intimate partner violence impacts Californians.

Assess all current sources of funding and advocate for changes to help the state make progress on its strategy to reduce, prevent, and recover from intimate partner violence. The Governor and Legislature should supply sufficient funding to meet state goals.

The state's primary response to intimate partner violence is the Domestic Violence Assistance Program, discussed earlier in the report. It is a shelter-based program in which the 102 grant recipients must provide shelter along with 13 other services to survivors in order to receive the funding. The 102 current grant recipients are among the original recipients when the state restructured its domestic violence funding in the wake of the Office of Criminal Justice Planning's shutdown and the Great Recession. All grant recipients receive equal amounts of funding, and barring misuse of funds or severe performance failures, by statute they are guaranteed to receive non-competitive funding indefinitely should they apply for it. Statute outlines a process to add new service providers to the group; since the funds are divided equally among the recipients, the addition of new grantees naturally would lower the amount of money all of the grant recipients receive. So far Cal OES has not opened the grant pool to organizations outside of the original 100.

The state temporarily has been able to fund a variety of additional programs due to Congress quadrupling Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) authorizations for multi-

year grants from FY 2015-17 in the aftermath of multi-billion-dollar settlements in the Volkswagen emissions and banking foreign exchange and interest rate manipulation cases, but that money is drying up and cannot be considered a sustainable funding source.

The way the state chooses to fund intimate partner violence raises a number of questions that can essentially be summarized in two:

1. Does this funding framework support the state's objectives for intimate partner violence?
2. Is it sustainable?

The state's new point person will need the support of the Governor and Legislature to turn the answer to both of those questions into a resounding yes.

Recommendations

1. The State of California should adopt a strategic approach to intimate partner violence that is focused on prevention and early intervention, while continuing to support crisis intervention and victim services.
2. The Governor should designate a leader who will be responsible for steering California to a prevention- and early-intervention approach. This leader should:
 - a) Bring stakeholders together to develop the state's goals for intimate partner violence, identify metrics to measure progress toward those goals, and craft an evidence-based strategy to reach the goals.
 - b) Create a framework for data collection and analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the methods the state is using to combat intimate partner violence. The leader must not be afraid to change course if the evidence indicates current methods are not working. The state must include funding in its grants for organizations to hire a data manager or analyst.

- c) Modernize processes with a focus on customer service.
- d) Establish in-house expertise on intimate partner violence.
- e) Ensure often overlooked groups are prioritized in the strategic plan.
- f) Assess all current sources of funding and advocate for changes to help the state make progress on its strategy to reduce, prevent, and recover from intimate partner violence. The Governor and Legislature should supply sufficient funding to meet state goals.

Prevention and Intervention

The state must strengthen its effort toward prevention and early intervention. Crisis intervention is critical, but pursued alone, it will always be too little, too late. These are the key principles that should undergird the state's prevention framework:

- **Long-term planning should be a critical component of state's response.** Reducing and preventing intimate partner violence is something that will be measured in generations, not fiscal years. Dr. Burke-Harris is leading the way with her efforts to halve childhood adverse experiences within a generation. Other state leaders should follow her lead.
- **We must invest in innovations around prevention.** "There has been a deep underinvestment in prevention and one of the outcomes of that has been very limited evidence-based practices," Lucia Corral Peña, Senior Program Officer for the Blue Shield Foundation of California, told the Commission.⁴²
- **This is a societal problem, not a personal one.**
 - We must stop putting the onus on victims to prevent their own abuse.

- In many places, domestic violence is normalized.
- Intimate partner violence is not an anomaly in an otherwise harmonious society: We must address how it intersects with other forms of violence and marginalization.
- **Prevention and intervention must be a multi-modal approach that becomes as pervasive as intimate partner violence.** There is no single solution; it will require the collective efforts of all Californians.
- **We must reach at-risk people as early in life as possible.**
- **Many state programs already have anti-violence responsibilities; California's leaders must encourage them to prioritize those responsibilities.**
- **California's leaders must be willing to legislate collaboration and other actions or require it as a condition to receive funding.** This is not because officials don't care about intimate partner violence, but an acknowledgment of the reality that many officials are under-resourced and overworked, and this is how you make something a priority.
- **The state must create a permanent funding stream in order to invest in prevention and early intervention.** Five million dollars is not enough.
- **We must change how we work with people who have caused harm.**

Batterer Intervention Programs

Californians convicted of domestic violence must participate in a batterers intervention program (BIP) as a condition of their probation. State law outlines a variety of requirements for offenders and for the content of the programs, but also leaves quite a bit of room for variation in program quality, which can

present significant challenges for participants. A requirement to attend for two hours per week for 52 consecutive weeks, for example, does not take into account the availability of group sessions, geographic distance, or participants' work schedules. Many participants work shifts instead of an 8 to 5 office job. Participants should not have to choose between their job or completing the terms of their probation.

Another problem is that BIPs are not widely available. Plumas Rural Services, for example, serves three counties in the Sierra Nevada with its BIP. Because BIPs must be entirely funded by participants, the organization can only afford to hold sessions two days a week. Public transportation is not widely available in the Sierra Nevada, most of the organization's clients live far from the two bus routes that do run through Quincy, where the BIP is located, and winter storms sometimes shut down roads and bus service.⁴³

The fee presents another problem for participants. No taxpayer funds can be used for BIPs, but the \$100 to nearly \$200 per month for classes puts a strain on low-income families. And for Plumas Rural Services, at least, these are families: Many of their clients' partners choose to stay, which means that the participants' fees are taking money from the family pot. Participants can't stay if they can't pay, and missing too many classes ends in arrest. Participants then spend 10 to 30 days in jail for violating probation, often losing their job and accruing even more fees in the process. And when they are released, they must go right back to paying for their BIP classes. If they wait more than 30 days after release to re-enroll, their progress in the BIP resets, and they must start all over again.⁴⁴ When a large part of a program's success depends on the relationship between client and facilitator, and the facilitator has to act as a debt collector, these requirements put that relationship to the test and threatens the participant's success.

Ironically, if someone treats their partner badly enough that they go to prison, the state pays for their rehabilitation, in theory, at least. When there is still a chance to intervene before the abuse rises to that level, however, offenders are on their own.

The format of BIPs presents more challenges. Requiring participants to attend same-gender classes ignores that fact that some perpetrators of intimate partner violence are in same-sex relationships. Furthermore, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find classes for genders outside of the male-female binary. Similar challenges arise for people who communicate via American Sign Language or who do not speak English. The emphasis on using writing as a form of accountability ignores that fact that California ties with Texas and Mississippi for the second worst literacy rates in the nation.⁴⁵

Ironically, if someone treats their partner badly enough that they go to prison, the state pays for their rehabilitation, in theory, at least. When there is still a chance to intervene before the abuse rises to that level, however, offenders are on their own.

Santa Clara Superior Court Judge Stephen Manley shared his assessment of the state's BIP requirements:

"What goes on is this: If you are well-educated, white, have a job, and a good income, you'll do fine and sail through these programs. But that changes the minute you start talking about someone low income. They can't complete the program, can't pay for them, and the legislation is simply perpetuating

a myth: The counties can develop programs for everyone. They don't and they can't.

The court system is built on giving people equal access, equal justice. So if you are required to do something, there should be a way for you to be able to do it. If I order you to a BIP class, there should be a class for you to go to. Santa Clara only has one program for the indigent: There is a year-long wait list. To get around these requirements you can place people on informal probation, but that means no one is paying attention to them.

If we really cared about the problem, we would engage the community: social services, the foster care system. We would have a system of incentives and sanctions, and give seven incentives for every sanction. I think we need a major change by the Legislature. We need wraparound services. We need navigators and peer navigators. We need to have social services, behavioral health, probation, all together working with the family. We should be required to consider a plan that is realistic and involves the individual. But this all costs money and we have no money."⁴⁶

The Commission is not arguing that BIPs are inherently bad; the Commission heard from two BIPs that no one could doubt are committed to serving and rehabilitating their clients. The problem is that the statute and system are structured in such a way that it's nearly down to chance – except the odds are stacked against participants who are not financially secure – whether the program will work for a participant or leave them indebted in the county lockup. That's not justice; it's not rehabilitation; and it has not reduced rates of intimate partner violence in California.

The state must review its requirements for batterer intervention programs to determine what facilitates rehabilitation and what hinders it. There is an ongoing six-county pilot project to see if program flexibility leads to fewer repeat offenses. This is a

good start, but there still are no wraparound services and the flexibility is limited to a couple of options regarding length of time in the program and class format. The state must take that next step and determine how to create a suite of services that can be tailored to the specific rehabilitative needs of an individual. Finally, the state must ensure that all offenders can access rehabilitative services, regardless of ability to pay. It is much less costly to the state than the alternative.

Recommendations

3. The state should develop a comprehensive long-term intimate partner violence prevention and early intervention action plan. California must integrate its antiviolenace initiative into every segment of society. The state must provide adequate funding to implement this plan.
4. The state should review its requirements for batterer intervention programs to determine if they facilitate rehabilitation. Additionally, the state should begin a process to determine how to tailor rehabilitative services to an individual's needs. Finally, the state should ensure that rehabilitation is not contingent on an individual's ability to pay.

Enforcing California's Intimate Partner Violence-Related Gun Laws

Women in the United States are 21 times more likely than their peers in other wealthy countries to be shot to death.⁴⁷ Most of these women are killed by their current or former intimate partner.⁴⁸ Nationwide, more than 600 women are shot to death by their intimate partner each year. More than 1 million women in the U.S. today have survived a shooting attempt by their partner.⁴⁹ Another 4.5 million women in the U.S. report having been threatened by a partner wielding a firearm.⁵⁰ And women of color disproportionately bear the burden of these

shootings, with black and American Indian/Alaska Native women being nearly three times more likely to be murdered than their white counterparts.⁵¹ Worse, these rates are increasing over time: A 2019 study analyzing FBI data found that domestic violence firearms homicides increased by 26 percent between 2010 and 2017.⁵²

More Victims

The violence often extends beyond the target of the abuser's ire. A 2014 study found that 20 percent of deaths in intimate partner homicides were collateral victims, people who were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. One quarter of collateral victims are children. Most collateral victims are killed with a firearm.⁵³

Law enforcement officers are also endangered. According to the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, 40 percent of law enforcement officer homicides between 2010 and 2016 occurred while responding to domestic violence calls. Offenders killed officers with firearms in all but one of those homicides.⁵⁴ An officer with nearly three decades of experience explained the dynamics of a domestic violence call:

The most dangerous time, the time when we're getting killed the most often, is in the approach. It's the ambush. Often they know we're coming, so we don't park right out front.

The nature of the crime adds another complication. Domestic violence is about one person's desire to control another. The police officer who arrives at the scene is taking away some of that control.

Say I'm knocking on this person's door, telling him he has minutes to grab a couple of personal belongings. I'm telling him: "You have to leave, there's a hearing in three days. I don't want to hear about your toolbox, or your big screen TV. You can't contact this person or your kids. Oh, and you



Why Don't They Just Leave?⁵⁵

- HOPE FOR THE VIOLENCE TO CEASE
- ISOLATED FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS
- FEAR OF RETALIATION
- PRIOR NEGATIVE COURT EXPERIENCES
- NO PLACE TO GO
- THEY'RE UNDOCUMENTED AND FEAR DEPORTATION
- FINANCIAL ABUSE
- LOW SELF-ESTEEM
- NEED ABUSER'S HEALTH INSURANCE DUE TO MEDICAL PROBLEMS
- FEAR OF LOSING CHILD CUSTODY
- NO JOB SKILLS
- NO KNOWLEDGE OF OPTIONS
- SHAME AND EMBARRASSMENT
- LACK OF TRANSPORTATION
- PRESSURE FROM CHILDREN OR FAMILY TO STAY TOGETHER

still have to pay your rent and the telephone bill.” Imagine what that does to a person who’s all about control.⁵⁶

Finally, there is a connection between intimate partner homicides and mass shootings.⁵⁷ According to an analysis by Bloomberg News, 60 percent of mass shootings are committed by men who are actively in the process of trying to kill their partner or who have a history of domestic violence. The higher

the death toll, the more likely it is that the shooter has a history of abusing partners.⁵⁸

State Response to IPV-Related Homicides

A woman is five times more likely to be killed by her abusive partner if he has access to a firearm than if he does not.⁵⁹

Beyond the Target of the Abuser’s Ire: Seal Beach Shooting

In the quaint community of Seal Beach, California, Michelle Fournier was the ultimate “Italian mama” to her three children. She loved cooking dinners and baking cakes for their birthdays, and always made a lemon cake with cream cheese frosting for her eldest son, Chad. Michelle occasionally took leftovers from these celebrations to share with her coworkers at the local Salon Meritage, where she was a beloved hairstylist. Clients gushed about Michelle’s chatty nature and hilarious banter with fellow stylists. But beneath her cheerful demeanor, Michelle was a victim of intimate partner violence. Her husband, Scott, physically abused her and at one point held a gun on her. The couple divorced, but Scott’s abusive behavior continued during a bitter custody battle over their eight-year-old son. “I have learned that it is wisest to avoid conflicts with him at all costs,” Michelle wrote in court documents. “That means not only avoiding physical confrontations but avoiding verbal ones as well.” She confided in a close friend that Scott had threatened to come to Salon Meritage and kill her. Two months later, after arguing with Michelle over the phone, Scott stormed into the salon and shot Michelle multiple times before turning the gun on her coworkers, customers, and a patron of the restaurant next door. Eight innocent lives – mothers, daughters,

fathers, sons – were lost in the span of two horrific minutes. The only victim to survive the carnage was the mother of a slain hairstylist who pretended to be dead to escape Scott’s wrath. Scott was later sentenced to eight terms of life imprisonment without parole, one term for each innocent life he extinguished at Salon Meritage. Hundreds of family members, friends, and members of the Seal Beach community gathered to celebrate Michelle’s life with flowers and blue ribbons, her favorite color. Her children find ways to keep her memory alive. Michelle’s daughter, Chelsea, made her brother Chad a lemon cake for his birthday, just like her mom used to do.



Employees of Salon Meritage. Michelle Fournier (center right), Victoria Buzzo (far left), Randy Fannin (top left), and Christy Wilson (top center) were killed by Michelle’s ex-husband Scott.

Federal law prohibits offenders convicted of a domestic violence misdemeanor from possessing or acquiring firearms and ammunition. Additionally, subjects of domestic violence protection orders are prohibited from possessing or acquiring firearms and ammunition in certain conditions.⁶⁰

California lawmakers have expanded federal prohibitions and closed loopholes in the federal law that allowed abusers access to firearms. The Legislature expanded prohibitions of firearm and ammunition possession to include convictions for assault, battery, and stalking misdemeanors.⁶¹ The latter is critical because roughly 76 percent of women murdered by their intimate partner are stalked by their murderer in the year before their death, and 85 percent of women who survive attempted murder by their intimate partner report being stalked by their partner or ex-partner in the year preceding the attempt.⁶²

A woman is five times more likely to be killed by her abusive partner if he has access to a firearm than if he does not.

In addition, federal law narrowly defines a subset of relationships with the victim that would make an abuser ineligible to possess a firearm if convicted of a domestic violence offense or the subject of a protective order. California removes firearms and ammunition from all people convicted of the above crimes. Importantly, California's expanded law protects dating partners instead of limiting protections to victims who were (or once were) married to, lived with, or had a child with their abuser.⁶³ Closing the "boyfriend loophole" matters because dating partners who are not married and do not necessarily live or co-parent together account for about half of intimate partner homicides.⁶⁴

California also allows ex parte prohibitions, which are temporary emergency requests for a protective order that must be followed by a hearing. Unlike in many other states, family, teachers, and employers in California can request ex parte prohibitions if subjected to troubling behavior. Removing firearms from the subjects of protective orders as quickly as possible is imperative: A study found that 20 percent of homicide victims with a temporary protective order were murdered within two days of the order being issued. A third were killed within the month following the order being issued.⁶⁵

Challenges in Implementing California's Firearms Laws

California has a solid legal framework in place to remove firearms from people who cause harm. The challenges arise in implementation. In 2019, California's Bureau of Firearms removed 2,130 firearms from people prohibited from owning them. Of those, 1,007 firearms – nearly half – were unknown to the agents removing the firearms.⁶⁶ Of those, 41 were ghost guns, which is beyond the scope of this report. The rest of the unknown weapons represent weaknesses in the databases that are supposed to track this information and, more importantly, endanger California's law enforcement agents and potential victims.

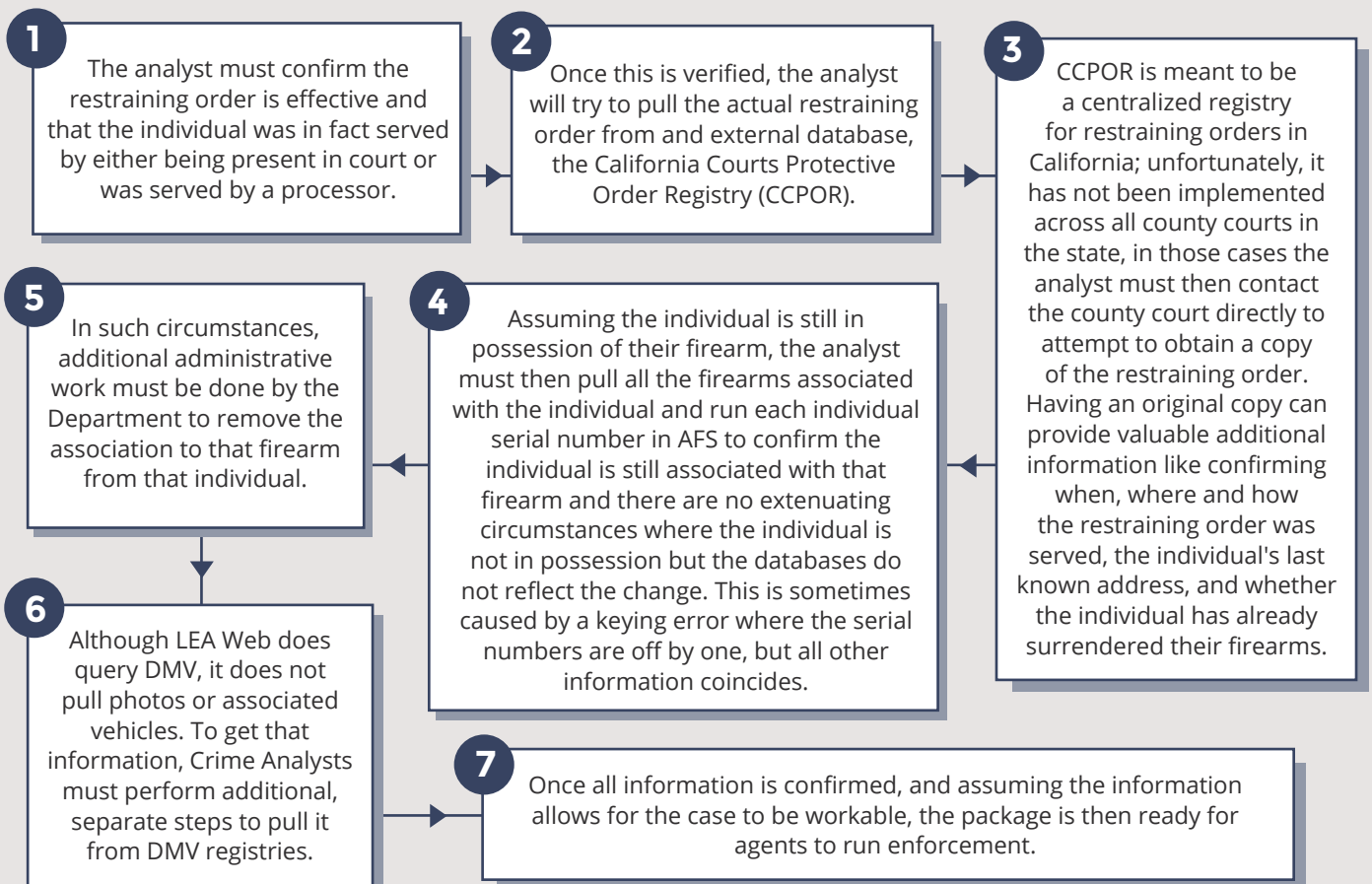
THE ARMED PROHIBITED PERSONS SYSTEM (APPS)

The California Department of Justice developed the Armed Prohibited Persons System (APPS) to identify firearm owners who also are subject to a restraining order or have been convicted of an offense that would prohibit them from possessing firearms. APPS is a data aggregator that allows users to draw on information from 11 databases to provide firearm eligibility updates upon request. Importantly, APPS does not automatically cross-reference those 11 databases and alert the Department of Justice to potential firearms owners who may no longer

How the State Removes Firearms from Offenders⁷²

The APPS database is not an automated system that cross-reference across all firearms databases; therefore, creating a complete case package for investigation requires the Crime Analyst to manually cross check across multiple additional databases. As it stands, the system is extremely cumbersome to operate. When a user retrieves a single case, all information tabs must be verified prior to acting on enforcement; that starts with confirming the individual's name, birthdate and driver's license number match across all systems. Then, using Law Enforcement Agency Web (LEA Web), the Crime Analyst will run a multiple query using the individual's driver's license number. LEA Web is a California-unique database that queries some of California's databases like the California Restraining and Protective Order System, Automated Firearms System, Automated Criminal History System, California Department of Motor Vehicles, Mental Health Reporting System, Wanted Persons System and the Supervised Release Files. Each case is highly variable, and the circumstances and information provided for each case will determine how a Crime Analyst conducts their research. For example, an individual can be prohibited under multiple categories; the prohibiting category determines which databases a Crime Analyst must use to verify the prohibition is still current and that the case is workable.

The complexity of the system can be seen even in the most straightforward of circumstances. In the case of an individual who has only one firearm and is only prohibited by one restraining order, the process would be as follows.



be eligible to possess them. In fact, the system is physically incapable of doing that. “Many of these systems and subsequent modifications or enhancements to these systems have been in reaction to numerous legislative mandates that have been implemented since the first system was built, in 1980. As a result, the network of systems has become increasingly complex over the last several decades, with each system using different logic that cannot be applied to modifications needed across multiple systems,” wrote department officials in a budget request to modernize the system and its inputs.⁶⁷

The steps a crime analyst must take to assemble a case file in even the simplest of cases are time-consuming, labor-intensive, and an inefficient use of their resource and expertise. The graphic on page 20 outlines the process to prepare a case for someone who owns one firearm and is the subject of one restraining order.

The California Department of Justice identifies five APPS databases and systems used to identify firearm owners who are no longer eligible to possess weapons:⁶⁸

1. Automated Criminal History System (ACHS).

ACHS is the repository of Californians’ interactions with the criminal justice system. It has long been criticized for incomplete records, often due to insufficient court and law enforcement personnel to input data for millions of criminal justice system interactions.⁶⁹ The system also is stymied by incomplete records in the databases that inform it. For example, The Offender-Based Transaction System, which is supposed to capture the final outcome for felony arrests, is only estimated to have that information in 65 to 75 percent of its records.⁷⁰

2. Automated Firearms System (AFS). AFS was created in 1980 to record which firearms are in the custody of whom and to track lost or stolen firearms through serial numbers. Long guns have

only been required to be added into the database since 2014. Aside from ghost and stolen weapons, the database has shortcomings even for weapons obtained legally: People own weapons from before the laws were made; people move around the state without updating their address or move to California from other states without registering their firearms; people move out of state, are institutionalized, or die, and the state loses track of their firearms.

3. California Restraining and Protective Order System (CARPOS).

This is a repository of individuals subject to a protective order, including domestic violence, gun violence, and other restraining orders. Though intended to be the centralized depository for all California restraining order, not all counties have adopted the California Courts Protective Order Registry, a critical feeder database for CARPOS.⁷¹ Consequently, crime analysts must query some courts individually to obtain copies of an individual’s restraining order.

4. Mental Health Reporting System (MHRS).

MHRS is an application used by mental health facilities, courts, and law enforcement to report mental health-events that would prohibit someone from possessing a firearm.

5. Wanted Persons System (WPS). WPS is a database of individuals with outstanding arrest warrants.

The state of the current APPS system leaves the California Department of Justice unable to meet statutory requirements.⁷³ Or, as the department describes it:

The firearms systems can no longer be enhanced in a cost effective or efficient manner and cannot be further utilized to implement the changing needs of law enforcement and California as a whole. The systems were designed to meet user needs based on outdated system design practices and point-in-time business requirements. The current design method results in significantly longer development

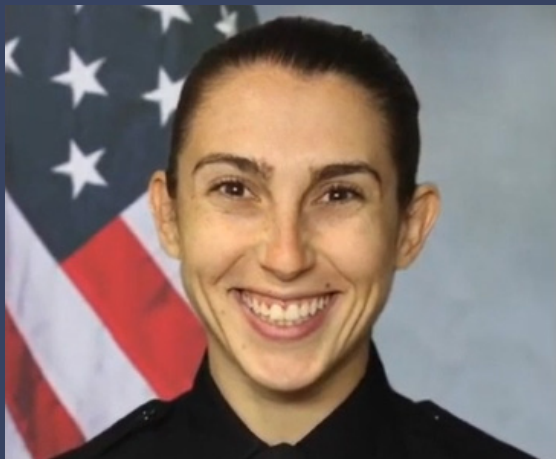
times, requires more resources, and requires longer and more extensive regression testing, making it difficult to respond to the constantly evolving landscape of statutory mandates pertaining to firearms.⁷⁴

The 2020-21 budget includes \$2.4 million for the department to hire consultants and the California Department of Technology for an 18 to 24 month

systems analysis and planning process to modernize the state's firearms systems. The long-term goal is to rework APPS into two systems: one accessible by the Department of Justice and the other accessible to the public.⁷⁵

Given the urgency to supply the Department of Justice and its partners with accurate information, and in the face of the state's economic downturn, the

Killed in the Line of Duty: Tara O'Sullivan



Tara O'Sullivan wanted nothing more than to serve as a police officer. Turning her dream into a reality, O'Sullivan graduated from the Sacramento Police Academy in December 2018, where she was just one of seven women in her class. After working for the Sacramento Police Department for six months, 26-year-old O'Sullivan was just two weeks away from the last phase of her officer training when she joined several other officers in responding to a domestic dispute between a man and a woman at a home in north Sacramento. Police experts equate responding to domestic violence calls to "walking into an emotional powder keg" as officers try to swiftly and safely diffuse emotions and settle the situation. Unfortunately, this is not always possible and

O'Sullivan and the other officers would be walking into what would later be described as the "worst-case scenario." The officers were there to stand watch as the woman retrieved her belongings from the detached garage to leave the home. Barricaded inside the main house was Adel Sambrano Ramos. Ramos – who has a lengthy criminal record dating back to 1995 and had been convicted of domestic violence, battery, petty theft, and driving under the influence – opened fire on the officers with a high-powered rifle, shooting O'Sullivan in the back. Ramos continued firing, trapping O'Sullivan in the backyard where she lay wounded awaiting help. Nearly 45 minutes later, officers drove an armored vehicle into the backyard to rescue O'Sullivan. Ramos continued shooting at the officers as they exited, disabling the vehicle. Officers were able to carry O'Sullivan to a nearby police car and transport her to the hospital where she was later pronounced dead. During the stand-off between Ramos and the officers, Ramos opened fire 30 times using two assault rifles, a shotgun, and a handgun – which investigators later found placed throughout the home. Roughly eight hours after police arrived at the house, Ramos surrendered and was arrested. O'Sullivan, who gave her life protecting her community, is remembered for her strength and bravery.

Commission believes it would be useful during the anticipated 18 to 24 month process to identify laws and regulations that could be adjusted to expedite the implementation of the modernized system at an affordable price. For example, the Department of Justice found it could expedite the rollout of firearm precursor licensing, eligibility checks, and authorizations to combat the rise of ghost guns two to three years early with an additional \$10 million in general funds spread over two years.⁷⁶

Human Resources

It is imperative that firearms be removed from an offender immediately upon conviction of an offense that would prohibit them from owning firearms or upon issuance of a restraining order. However, there are not enough people to meet the need to remove firearms from those prohibited from owning them at all levels of government.

When crime analysts complete a case file for an armed person prohibited from owning firearms, the case is then given to a special agent. Special agents are responsible for locating and retrieving the weapon. It is dangerous work. The agents are working with an armed population defying a court order. Further, it is not uncommon to discover in the field that an individual is more heavily armed than official records indicate. In addition to being dangerous, the job requires skillful interaction with individuals for agents to obtain the information they need to remove the firearm or close the case. On average, it takes three in-person interviews to close a case. This often is due to the individual in question claiming (sometimes accurately) they already surrendered the firearm, lost it, or gave it away, among other reasons, which requires the agent to take even more steps to track down the firearm. In 2019, DOJ special agents made 21,696 contacts with only 45 special agents, trainees, and supervisors to perform that work.⁷⁷

The Department of Justice has authorization to employ 71 special agents, supervisors, and trainees for this purpose. But the department isn't a competitive employer. Unlike other law enforcement agencies, its agents must undergo the time and expense of completing a college degree. Yet their entry-level pay is 17 percent lower than comparable law enforcement agencies. Any advantages conferred by a negotiated pay raise in 2019 were wiped out when other state and local law enforcement agencies received similar or higher pay raises. The department also is slow in recruitment; it can take up to 12 months to bring an agent on board. Part of the lengthy process is unavoidable; agents must pass comprehensive background checks. However, the agency encounters a recurring problem with potential hires giving up midway through the process and to take a job with a different law enforcement agency that will allow them to start sooner or pay them more.⁷⁸

Though it may be difficult to find the funding during an economic downturn, the Commission believes that as soon as the budget allows, special agent, supervisor, and trainee pay should be increased to be commensurate with their peers at comparable institutions, and should reflect the additional requirements, such as a college degree, asked of them. To stay competitive, the state should routinely review salaries of the position's peers and create a minimum threshold for which their pay cannot fall beneath.

Recommendations

5. As part of its planning process to modernize its firearms databases, the Department of Justice should identify reasonable means by which implementation could be safely and affordably expedited, including waivers of statutes and regulations if necessary. The Administration and Legislature should provide the department reasonable support to expedite the process.

a) The modernized databases should allow automatic cross-checking of information as a “first pass” in determining which firearms owners are prohibited from possessing firearms, freeing up crime analyst to work on more complicated cases.

6. The state should increase the pay of the Department of Justice’s special agents, special agent supervisors, and special agent trainees to make the positions more competitive with other law enforcement agencies. Additionally, the state should routinely review comparable salaries and ensure DOJ special agent salaries remain competitive with other law enforcement agencies.

A Long-Term View of Survival Needs: Economic Independence and Housing

When I first met one of my clients, Maxine, she was ready to take her 3 young children and leave her abusive boyfriend. After walking Maxine through our intake process, I was able to help her obtain a temporary restraining order in court. However, I quickly realized that getting Maxine and her children out of immediate danger wasn’t enough.

You see, Maxine’s boyfriend prevented her from working and had complete control over the family’s resources during the relationship. This left Maxine with hardly any money and no way to make an income. While we were successful in getting Maxine and her kids a temporary restraining order, they had no place to go, no money to pay for necessities, and no job prospects. I had to find Maxine and her kids emergency housing, buy them groceries and diapers, help Maxine look for job opportunities, and find childcare so that she could go to job interviews.

When my representation of Maxine ended, she and her kids were still in emergency housing struggling

to afford necessities without any income. I walked away feeling helpless, sure that Maxine would go back to her boyfriend, because she and her children simply couldn’t afford to stay away.

- Amy Durrence, Director of Law and Policy, FreeFrom⁷⁹

Maxine’s story illustrates the complex challenges a survivor encounters when trying to leave an abusive relationship. In addition to the physical danger of leaving and the necessity of establishing a new household overnight and often with few resources, the economic abuse experienced by survivors can harm them long after they have left the relationship. Preliminary findings from a study on survivor financial insecurity are bleak:

- 100 percent of the survivors in the sample experienced some form of economic abuse.
- 98 percent experienced economic restriction, such as not being allowed to access their financial information.
- 96 percent experienced economic sabotage, such as having a loan taken out in their name without their permission.
- 98 percent experienced education or employment sabotage, such as being prohibited from taking classes or working.⁸⁰

The impacts of the economic abuse were severe. Again referencing preliminary results, the study’s authors testified that just 43 percent of the survivors they sampled had a checking account and 24 percent had a savings account. Their average credit score was 578, which credit bureaus classify as very poor. The team recounted the story of one survivor who, upon leaving her abusive partner, discovered that he had taken out multiple credit cards in her name without her knowledge. She learned she was \$17,000 in debt, could not make the payments, and the credit card company refused to treat the charges as fraudulent; consequently, her credit score was in the 200s. She had a very difficult time finding housing, a job, and

My Sister's Café and My Sister's House in Sacramento

Earlier this year, the Little Hoover Commission visited My Sister's Café, run by My Sister's House, a nonprofit organization in Sacramento that seeks to eliminate domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking among the Asian and Pacific Islander community as well as underserved women and children throughout the region. The vast array of culturally relevant services offered by My Sister's House – a 24-hour multilingual help line, Spanish-speaking support groups, and Safe Haven shelter serving the needs of the highly diverse Asian and Pacific Islander population – enables staff to provide lifesaving information and assistance to survivors of all backgrounds. By tailoring IPV support services to meet the needs of specific populations, My Sister's House is able to effectively address linguistic or cultural barriers that prevent many survivors of IPV from seeking help and provide survivors from diverse cultures with care specific to their needs. Their Women to Work program, which offers clothing, childcare, career guidance and more, helps women who may have never been given the freedom to explore their interests and talents establish financial independence and stability away from their abusers. At My Sister's Café, survivors



Executive Director Ethan Rarick greets My Sister's House Executive Director Nilda Guanzon Valmores.

are given the opportunity to gain valuable work experience in restaurant operations and preparing and serving sandwiches, salads, coffees and teas inspired by Asian cuisine to the public. Since 2003, My Sister's House has served more than 4,000 domestic violence survivors of all ethnicities in their Women to Work Program, responded to over 21,500 calls to their multilingual help line, provided more than 52,000 nights of shelter to women and children, and hosted twelve annual conferences training over 500 service providers across the Central Valley on cultural competency and working with immigrant women. Such training is essential to ensure providers throughout California are able to provide welcoming, supportive environments and services to IPV survivors from all walks of life.

insurance, Ms. Durrence testified. That victim was not alone. A different study found that 52 percent of survivors were saddled with coerced or fraudulent debt.⁸¹ A 2018 Centers for Disease control study found that female survivors pay on average \$103,000 for expenses related to domestic violence.⁸² "If you are leaving with no cash, no job, no credit, and six

figures of debt," asked FreeFrom CEO Sonya Passi, "how can you move forward and rebuild your life?"⁸³

This section will discuss ways the state can help survivors attain economic stability and long-term safety. It also will focus on one component that deserves additional attention due its intersection

with one of California’s most pernicious challenges: safe, affordable housing for survivors and their dependents.

Economic Independence

Economic independence is the key for survivors to be able to successfully leave an abusive relationship. There are several ways the state can help survivors land on their feet, and many of them simply involve adjustments to programs and processes the state already has in place to help its residents to meet the unique needs of survivors.

“If you are leaving with no cash, no job, no credit, and six figures of debt,” asked FreeFrom CEO Sonya Passi, “how can you move forward and rebuild your life?”

Create an Identity-Focused Reentry Program for Survivors

Survivors of economic abuse can suffer from more than not knowing about or not being in control of their credit and bank accounts. They may not have access to their own birth certificate, driver’s license, social security card, passport, and other vital documents necessary to travel or secure a job, housing, or financial aid.

The state should create a one-stop “reentry” program that collaborates with county vital records offices, credit bureaus, and financial institutions to:

- **Inform.** Help survivors get copies of their and their dependents’ vital records, credit reports, and scores from all of the major credit bureaus, and a listing of all bank, checking, investment, and other financial accounts in their name.

- **Recover.** If the survivor has been subject to identity theft or fraud, the program should help them create a recovery plan with the Federal Trade Commission. It should walk them through all of the other entities, like utility companies, they may need to contact to close fraudulent accounts, and to send affidavits of identity theft to government agencies to explain why there might be double filings for their tax returns or government benefits. It should help them establish new banking and credit accounts out of reach of their partner. In the worst scenarios, it should help survivors apply for a new social security number and provide ongoing assistance to help survivors navigate the challenges that will arise from having no credit or any other history on the new number.
- **Protect.** The program should help the survivor protect their identity from future assaults by teaching them how to freeze and unfreeze their credit, signing them up with a credit monitoring program, and providing financial literacy classes.

California’s Lowest Income Survivors Overlooked by Victim Compensation Framework

The Victim Compensation Board reimburses crime victims for direct expenses related to the crime. For federal crimes, the funding is channeled through the VOCA State Crime Victim Compensation Formula Grant. For victims of non-federal crimes, California has instituted a similar system through its Restitution Fund. Neither fund is supported by taxpayers; they both receive payments from offenders in the form of penalties or court-ordered restitution. The Victim Compensation Board is supposed to be the reimbursor of last resort, following insurance payouts, legal settlements, and other sources.

The problem with this reimbursement model is that

many survivors do not have the funds available to first pay for the services for which they would eventually be reimbursed. Nor do they often have the funds available to hire an attorney to file a civil case to seek restitution from their abuser. And there is plenty to retribute: In their Covid-19 assistance survey, FreeFrom found that the survivors they served suffered on average \$17,770 in property damage annually by their abuser, and on average had \$1,280 per month stolen from them by their abuser.⁸⁴ These losses do not include the costs of medical bills, mental health care, and other services survivors often need. To compound the matter, the legal services attorneys receiving grant funding to help survivors usually cannot file civil cases on behalf of their clients due to funding restrictions,⁸⁵ meaning that survivors are out of luck if they cannot fund their own legal battle.

California should take the following steps to make the non-federal portion of its victim compensation program accessible to the lowest-income Californians:

REAL-TIME PAYMENTS

Currently, some types of providers can directly invoice the Victim Compensation Board. The state should expand this system to include all service providers and vendors so that survivors' expenses are covered in real time. The Victim Compensation Board can then be reimbursed from any insurance or legal settlements the survivor receives, maintaining its role as reimbursor of last resort.

ADJUST REQUIREMENTS AND DEFINITIONS TO BETTER SERVE SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

California already has carved out some exceptions to standard Victim Compensation Board policies for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Even with those exceptions, the program still applies many of its policies broadly across all victims of crime, including its laser focus on preventing people who are hurt while committing

a crime from accessing any funding. Survivors get lost in a one-size-fits-all approach to all crimes that narrowly understands violence to be physical, treats decades of continuing abuse as a single incident subject to the reimbursement limits of a single incident, and barely acknowledges the effects of trauma, gaslighting, dependence, and fear on a survivor's ability to work with law enforcement against their abuser.

The Commission recommends a trauma-informed review of the statutes and regulations governing compensation to survivors, with follow-up by the Legislature and the Administration to lower the barriers between survivors and the financial compensation they need to rebuild their lives. Areas to begin include:

- **Allow compensation for emotional injuries beyond physical violence or threats of physical violence.** Currently survivors may only be reimbursed for emotional injuries if the person inflicting the emotional injury also physically harms or threatens to physically harm the survivor.⁸⁶ This misses the complexities of emotional and mental abuse suffered by survivors of intimate partner violence.
- **Allow all survivors to be compensated for their losses, regardless of their relationship with law enforcement.** Do not withhold compensation from survivors for failing to assist law enforcement in investigating, apprehending, and prosecuting their abuser.⁸⁷ This requirement currently imposed on survivors fails to acknowledge that abuse may lead survivors to feel fear, shame, or even an obligation to help their abuser. This also does not take into account that some communities have more fraught relationships with law enforcement and the judicial system than others; it is not uncommon for survivors to have had previous encounters with law enforcement where their claims were not taken seriously or restraining orders were not enforced, leading to personal

loss of trust in law enforcement. Additionally, some survivors come from countries where law enforcement and the judicial system are corrupt and they expect the same from the American system. Finally, this requirement does not acknowledge that survivors have good reason to fear their abuser: The first 90 days after a woman leaves her abuser are the most dangerous for her.⁸⁸ Three-fourths of all domestic violence homicides occur when partners decide to leave or physically leave.⁸⁹

- **Allow survivors of “loss of liberty” to receive loss of income or support compensation.**

Currently, only survivors who are employed at the time of their abuse can receive compensation for loss of income due to the abuse.⁹⁰ Survivors who are prevented from working or whose abusers’ actions lead to their being fired should also receive compensation for loss of income.

ALLOW SURVIVORS TO PURSUE CIVIL CASES AGAINST THEIR ABUSERS VIA THE STATE’S RESTITUTION FUND

Given the quantifiable losses experienced by survivors, the state’s Restitution Fund should cover the cost of taking civil action against an abuser, with the understanding that the costs of attorney fees and other monies fronted by the Victims Compensation Board will be reimbursed if the survivor is successful. While not all cases will be successful, this still will provide more recourse for survivors, particularly low-income survivors, to receive restitution. It also will shift some of the costs from the taxpayers and survivors’ own pockets to the people who actually caused the harm.

Expand the Removing Barriers to Employment Act to Explicitly Include Victims of Domestic Violence and Renew Funding

In 2017, California enacted the Removing Barriers to Employment Act, which charged the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) with creating a grant program to provide individuals with barriers to employment the services they need to participate in workforce preparation, training, and educational programs aligned with regional labor needs. It also asked CWDB to determine the populations that would be served and the activities that would be funded by the grant program. Local workforce development boards were then required to connect the community-based organizations that received the grants with America’s Job Center of California, a “one-stop shop” for free employment and training services hosted by the Employment Development Department. The purpose was to integrate the people served by the initiative into the education system and broader employment.

The Act specified 15 potential populations to be served. While some survivors would have been eligible for services under the grant because they belonged to other categories of target populations, the act did not specifically identify them as a target population.⁹¹ Given that one in three women and one in four men in California endure intimate partner violence, this seems a striking omission. The Legislature appropriated \$15 million for this initiative.

The legislation stated that funding did not have to be limited to the specified populations, but of the 26 award recipients, not one targeted domestic violence victims or any groups not on the list.⁹² Several grantees, however, planned to use their awards to assist former offenders. The Commission takes no issue with this assistance: For decades it has argued that employment is critical for rehabilitation and to reduce recidivism. There is a sad irony, however, that someone who harmed their partner had more of an opportunity to receive training and education under this initiative than the person they harmed.

The Legislature should expand the Removing Barriers

to Employment Act to explicitly include domestic violence victims, and issue another round of grant funding to provide opportunities for community-based organizations to help survivors and other struggling Californians attain the training and education they need to find employment.

Connect Survivors with Apprenticeship Opportunities

Survivors need to be able to support themselves financially, which can interfere with their educational goals. An apprenticeship program can allow them to earn money while they complete their education and training. Conveniently, California runs the largest apprenticeship program in the nation via the Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) under the Department of Industrial Relations.⁹³ While opportunities abound in the classic vision of apprenticeships in the skilled trades – to which DAS actively tries to recruit women – there also are opportunities in industries not typically associated with apprenticeships. These include such varied fields as cosmetology, cannabis, cybersecurity, and firefighting, which also is actively recruiting women and people of color. (More information can be found at www.dir.ca.gov/das.)

In addition to DAS' programs, the Department of Consumer Affairs recently concluded a stakeholder process on creating apprenticeships in the allied health professions, called Earn and Learn. The state is now working on implementing those findings and recommendations. Unlike traditional models of healthcare education in which students pay for their practical experience, the Earn and Learn model pays students for their work. Generally considered a win for all, this model helps train Californians for jobs that are projected to or already have worker shortages, provides pathways for upward mobility, and helps healthcare services reflect the communities they serve.

The state should create a mechanism that connects survivors with California's apprenticeship programs so survivors can attain an education or enhance their skills to be competitive for a higher-paying job while simultaneously supporting themselves.

Help the Helpers

A large reason survivors have difficulty obtaining financial recovery services through community-based organizations is that the employees of those organizations are not in a position to provide the advice and assistance survivors need. Serving survivors of domestic violence is a calling for many; they certainly are not doing it to get rich or because it is easy. Consequently, the field tends to attract survivors because their personal experience compels them to help others. FreeFrom's Financial Freedom study found that the average annual salary of a service provider in Los Angeles is \$35,700. Their average credit card debt is \$6,563.¹⁰⁶

"How am I supposed to talk to my clients about savings and credit, when I don't have savings and have never checked my credit and feel like I'm barely making it through the month?" a service provider asked FreeFrom.¹⁰⁷

Right now, California's response to intimate partner violence is based on providing grants to community-based organization to provide hands-on assistance to survivors. It is unrealistic to expect service providers to help survivors toward financial recovery if they themselves have not experienced financial security. Consequently, if the state wishes for survivors to become economically independent, its model of service delivery is fundamentally flawed.

At a minimum, state-administered grants must provide a living wage to service providers. Not a survival wage, but a wage that allows them to live safely and healthfully in their community, obtain good health insurance, cover childcare and transportation expenses, and save for retirement.

Housing and LGBTQ+ Survivors

Shelters often lack the training and accommodations to adequately house and care for LGBTQ+ survivors. Many shelters often cater to cisgender women only, in order to create a “sisterhood” of support where women can feel empowered and safe.⁹⁴

According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 43 percent of LGBTQ+ survivors who sought shelter in 2017 were denied access, and 32 percent were turned away because of their gender identity.⁹⁵ Transgender women have a particularly difficult time finding a shelter that will accept them. A telephone survey of 100 homeless shelters in four states found that just 30 percent were willing to house transgender women with other women, while 13 percent said they would isolate the individual or house them with men and 21 percent refused shelter to transgender women entirely.⁹⁶

Those who find refuge frequently experience harmful treatment, especially in homeless shelters. Bisexual survivors of IPV were nearly two times as likely to report experiencing violence or discrimination in a shelter, while transgender women were nearly two and a half times more likely to experience violence.⁹⁷ In a nationwide survey of transgender individuals, 70 percent of respondents who stayed in a shelter reported experiencing some form of mistreatment due to their transgender identity. Twenty-five percent said they presented as the wrong gender in order to feel safe at a shelter, while 14 percent said they were forced by staff to present as the wrong gender in order to keep living at the shelter. Nearly one in ten were thrown out of the shelter once staff found out they were transgender, while 44 percent left due to poor treatment or unsafe conditions.⁹⁸

Without access to safe shelters, many LGBTQ+ survivors of IPV are forced to live on the streets.⁹⁹ But they often can't turn to authorities for help: They are more likely than their unsheltered peers to be targeted and mistreated by police officers. This leads to low levels of trust for authority figures, including shelters and service providers.¹⁰⁰

LGBTQ+ people also face increased levels of discrimination and stigma in finding stable housing.¹⁰¹ Discrimination regarding their gender identity and homelessness status can intersect in harmful ways with discrimination regarding ethnicity, mental illness, or disability.¹⁰² Being a survivor of IPV further adds to these negative effects.¹⁰³

The challenges LGBTQ+ survivors of IPV face finding safe, stable housing away from their abusers have dangerous implications. Some choose to stay in an abusive relationship.¹⁰⁴ Others choose to live on the streets rather than face harmful and hateful treatment in a shelter.¹⁰⁵

The state's grants must also include annual cost-of-living increases.

State leaders should imagine the cost of the alternative: What would the cost be to the state if all of its service providers quit overnight? What would

it cost to provide these same services itself (or fund the counties to do so)? What would union-negotiated wages and workplace safety requirements, paid holidays and time off, healthcare, vision, dental, retirement contributions, retirement healthcare, training, bike and public transit subsidies, geographic

pay differentials, bilingual pay differentials, merit raises, general salary increases, and all of the other benefits that create a security net for its employees cost the state if its own employees had to do the work that community-based organizations currently do?

A living wage and cost-of-living increase is a bargain.

Housing and Homelessness

Domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women, according to the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV).¹⁰⁸ On the organization's 2019 National Violence Counts day – a one-day unduplicated count of adults and children seeking domestic violence services in the U.S. – 3,307 victims of domestic violence received emergency and transitional housing in California. Another 630 victims requesting housing assistance were turned away that day in California due to lack of resources.¹⁰⁹

Sadly, any discussion on women and homelessness automatically is a discussion on children and homelessness. NNEDV did not release state-specific numbers, but nationally, 48 percent of people sheltered by domestic violence programs were adults; the remaining 52 percent were children. Nationwide, of the 7,732 people requesting shelter who were turned away, 40 percent were children.¹¹⁰

CRISIS RESPONSE -- CALWORKS VOUCHERS

The California Department of Social Services provides temporary assistance for victims of intimate partner violence.

Survivors can receive up to 32 days of motel vouchers, double the number for other CalWORKS recipients.

Additionally, 2017 legislation provided recourse for survivors and their children fleeing higher income partners.¹¹¹ Survivors now are considered homeless

and eligible for temporary housing assistance if they sign an affidavit swearing that they are victims of domestic violence and cannot access their partner's resources. They are immediately granted 16 days of housing assistance and another 16 if needed while establishing CalWORKS eligibility. If they establish eligibility for CalWORKS – and many do, the Department of Social Services reports, as they are homeless with few resources – they will receive the additional 32 days of shelter that CalWORKS survivors may receive. Californians are only eligible to receive housing support via signed affidavit once during their lifetime, however, so it's important for government agencies and nonprofits to work closely to help survivors successfully leave their abuser the first time.

The state is to be commended for creating a short-term housing solution for survivors of all income levels. The Commission recommends the following ways to bolster the program:

- **Advertise the program.** Many service providers and others the Commission heard from had not heard of the CalWORKS program – and these are people who spend careers in the industry. If even they are not familiar with the program, how can survivors know about this benefit?
- **Create parity for CalWORKS recipients.** Survivors fleeing with nothing from middle- and upper-class environments ultimately are eligible for 64 days of emergency housing assistance: The first 32 via a signed affidavit that they cannot access resources controlled by their partner and the second 32 upon enrollment into CalWORKS. Survivors already enrolled in CalWORKS who are fleeing an abusive environment should have the same access to emergency housing as their middle- and upper-class peers. The state should allow CalWORKS recipients experiencing intimate partner violence to receive a one-time extension of their housing assistance to a total of 64 days.

- **Allow unused emergency housing vouchers to be cashed out to pay for permanent housing expenses.** Ultimately the goal is for survivors to find permanent housing. If a survivor is able to find suitable permanent housing after two weeks in emergency housing, for example, but does not have the funds to pay the first and last month's rent, security deposit, and other fees, then the state should cash out the value of the unused vouchers and allow the survivor to apply that money to those expenses.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOUSING FIRST

Emergency housing assistance is not enough to help survivors achieve long-term stability. Using VOCA funding, Cal OES has allowed service providers to innovate in helping survivors achieve security through Domestic Violence Housing First.

Domestic Violence Housing First is premised on the idea that the best way to reduce homelessness is to prevent it in the first place, ideally by allowing survivors to stay in their own home if it is safe for them. If survivors must move for their safety, because they cannot afford their home on one income, or for other reasons, the program seeks to help them quickly establish permanent housing before they experience homelessness.

The program operates on three core principles:¹¹²

- 1. Survivor-driven trauma-informed advocacy.** The idea is that advocates and survivors work together to find a solution that works for the survivor. Survivors set their own goals and advocates connect survivors with the resources they need to achieve them. This is a shift from the traditional top-down model in which the funder tells survivors what they need.
- 2. Flexible funding.** Traditional housing programs require funds to be spent on costs directly related to a dwelling, such as rent, a security deposit, or moving expenses. Domestic Violence

Housing First recognizes that the best way to keep someone in their home may be helping them with transportation expenses to get to work. For example, one survivor's ex-partner slashed all her car's tires. She lived far from work and public transportation. She did not need a security deposit: What she needed was to keep her job. So the program bought her new tires.

- 3. Community engagement.** Service providers who participate in Domestic Violence Housing First engage and form close relationships with their communities. In Napa, for example, there are very low vacancy rates for apartments, and people with good credit scores are competing for units that become available. Landlords can ask for proof of income three times the rent amount. Survivors often can't compete in that marketplace. A local service provider, Nurturing Empowerment Worth Safety (NEWS) Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse Services, forges relationships with area landlords to place survivors in available units. Landlords have learned that NEWS will jump in to assist survivors financially if they need it, and in many ways will act as a property manager for them. NEWS has developed a strong reputation as a safe bet, which smooths the way for future survivors to be given a chance.¹²¹

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOUSING FIRST WORKS AND SHOULD BE EXPANDED

Michigan State University researchers evaluated the impact of Domestic Violence Housing First on the clients of 19 of the 33 service providers participating in the program. These organizations served 925 survivors over a period of 21 months. Researchers found that 425 families were able to use the program to stay in their own home, 367 were able to obtain new housing, while the remaining 133 were still searching for safe and stable housing.¹²²

In addition to the three principles listed above, service providers shared another reason why Domestic Violence Housing First works for their

Pets and Housing

The beloved pets of IPV survivors can be a barrier as they contemplate fleeing abusive relationships. Perpetrators use animal abuse as a mechanism of coercion, yet a dearth of shelters accepting victims of abuse and their furry companions leaves survivors with few options to safely escape with their pets.¹¹³

Studies conducted across the United States, Ireland, and Australia have found that between 25 percent and 71 percent of pet-owning women receiving services for IPV-victimization experienced their partner threaten and/or harm their pet.¹¹⁴ According to a survey of IPV survivors, concern for pets prevented 38 percent of respondents from engaging in effective safety planning for their escape. Many respondents indicated they could not leave their abusive relationship without their pet or their partner would harm or kill the pet as retaliation. Others who left abusive situations with their pets experienced difficulty accessing pet-friendly domestic violence shelters and services.¹¹⁵ Out of 51 shelters in California that either provide shelter for pets, have a relationship with an entity that does, or provide referrals to such facilities, just seven – in Modesto, Crescent City, Chico, San Andreas, Kelseyville, Jackson, and Sacramento – allow pets to be housed on-site with their owners.¹¹⁶ Other housing options such as hotels and apartments often charge additional fees to allow animals on-site and can be too expensive for survivors to afford, particularly if they suffer from financial abuse.¹¹⁷ Faced with dismal options, many survivors remain with their pets in extremely dangerous, abusive situations.

In 2019, California passed a law that sought to alleviate the challenges survivors of domestic violence face when fleeing with their pets. AB 415 allows victims of domestic violence to receive up to \$2,000 from the Victim's Compensation Board for pet care costs incurred during relocation, including housing pets in temporary pet boarding or paying extra deposits or rent to stay with pets in a hotel or apartment.¹¹⁸ While this bill is certainly a step in the right direction for survivors who can afford the upfront payments necessary to secure such pet boarding and housing, some survivors are not so fortunate. A study of 103 survivors of domestic violence found that 99 percent experienced a form of financial abuse at some point during their relationships.¹¹⁹ Abusers often meticulously track the victim's use of money and can prevent them from accessing funds in a shared bank account,¹²⁰ thereby complicating efforts to escape and often forcing victims to remain under their abuser's control. As a result, many IPV survivors do not have funds immediately available to pay for pet care that can later be reimbursed.

California must do more to help survivors of IPV access lifesaving shelter for themselves and their pets. Through its Domestic Violence Assistance Program, California should encourage an expansion of shelters statewide that house pets on-site with their owners, and require all shelters receiving state funding to adopt plans specifying protections for pets and efforts to house them on-site with their owners.

clients: They don't have to adhere to federal Housing and Urban Development requirements when seeking housing. "It doesn't dictate that clients have to go to housing approved by local housing authority or HUD" said Connie Chung Joe, Executive Director for Korean American Family Services. "In LA our clients can't afford market rate apartments. We don't want to assist them with rent that's \$2,000 a month for six months to a year then say goodbye and good luck. Our clients want landlords who are Korean speaking, and sometimes these are small apartments owned by immigrants who wouldn't ever volunteer to go through a HUD housing process. They also stay in boarding houses with shared kitchens, or garage apartments and in-law units."¹²³

The state should expand Domestic Violence Housing First. There are a few challenges it must first iron out, however. The first is scale and sustainability. The state will need to find more funding for the program if it is to be a widespread program in California. Current funding came from large settlements into the VOCA fund, but there is no way to predict what kinds of settlements will feed the fund in the future. California needs its own, stable funding source. The second challenge is evaluation. California must continuously evaluate the program in order to understand if it is helping the state reach its goals. Only 19 of the 33 agencies chose to participate in the previous evaluation. This largely was because participation was not required as a condition of receiving funding. The state should require future grant recipients to participate in monitoring and evaluation as a condition of receiving funds – and of course build sufficient funding into the award for organizations to be able to do that.

A Seat at the Table

One constant, virtually unanimous refrain the Commission heard from service providers and advocates was the difficulty in getting leaders at all levels of government to understand the intersection

of domestic violence and homelessness and how widespread of a problem it is. Domestic violence shelters are often seen an answer to a problem, advocates told the Commission, a place where other agencies can stick people and free up space elsewhere. Less often are they invited to be part of the strategizing and policymaking to form the state's approach to homelessness and housing instability. To make a difference, they need a seat at the table.

Recommendations

7. The state should create a one-stop "reentry" program that collaborates with county vital records offices, credit bureaus, and financial institutions to help survivors gain access to their identity documents and understand their financial picture, recover from damage to their finances and credit, and protect against future economic abuse.
8. California should take the following steps to make the non-federal portion of its victim compensation program accessible to the lowest-income Californians:
 - a) Real-time payments from the Victims Compensation Board.
 - b) Adjust requirements and definitions to better serve survivors of intimate partner violence:
 - i. Allow compensation for emotional injuries beyond physical violence or threats of physical violence.
 - ii. Allow all survivors to be compensated for their losses, regardless of their relationship with law enforcement.
 - iii. Allow survivors who have experienced loss of liberty to receive loss of income or support compensation.
 - c) Allow survivors to pursue civil cases against their abuser via the state's Restitution Fund.

9. The Legislature should expand the Removing Barriers to Employment Act to explicitly include domestic violence victims, and issue another round of grant funding to provide opportunities for community-based organizations to help survivors attain the training and education they need to find employment.
10. The state should create a mechanism that connects survivors with California's apprenticeship programs so survivors can attain an education or enhance their skills to be competitive for a higher-paying job while simultaneously supporting themselves.
11. The state should require all state-administered domestic violence grants to provide a living wage and annual cost-of-living increases to awardees.
12. The state should enhance CalWORKS' emergency housing voucher program by:
 - a) Advertising the program.
 - b) Creating parity for CalWORKS recipients.
 - c) Allowing unused emergency housing vouchers to be cashed out to pay for permanent housing expenses.
13. The state should expand its Domestic Violence Housing First program.
 - a) It should create a stable, sustainable funding stream.
 - b) It should require participation in monitoring and evaluation to be a requirement to receive funding.
14. The state should include domestic violence experts in its policymaking processes for homelessness and housing instability.

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32. Connie Chung Joe, Executive Director, Korean American Family Services.
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■ Little Hoover Commission Members

CHAIRMAN PEDRO NAVA | Santa Barbara

Appointed to the Commission by Speaker of the Assembly John Pérez in April 2013 and reappointed by Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon in 2017. Government relations advisor. Former State Assemblymember from 2004 to 2010, civil litigator, deputy district attorney and member of the state Coastal Commission. Elected chair of the Commission in March 2014.

VICE CHAIRMAN SEAN VARNER | Riverside

Appointed to the Commission by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in April 2016 and reappointed in January 2018. Managing partner at Varner & Brandt LLP where he practices as a transactional attorney focusing on mergers and acquisitions, finance, real estate, and general counsel work. Elected vice chair of the Commission in March 2017.

DION ARONER | Berkeley

Appointed to the Commission by the Senate Rules Committee in April 2019. Partner for Aroner, Jewel, and Ellis. Former State Assemblymember from 1996 to 2002, chief of staff for Assemblymember Tom Bates, social worker for Alameda County, and the first female president of Service Employees International Union 535.

DAVID BEIER | San Francisco

Appointed to the Commission by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in June 2014 and reappointed in January 2018. Managing director of Bay City Capital. Former senior officer of Genentech and Amgen, and counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary.

CYNTHIA BUIZA | Los Angeles

Appointed to the Commission by Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon in October 2018. Executive director of the California Immigrant Policy Center. Former policy director for the American Civil Liberties Union, San Diego, and policy and advocacy director at the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles.

BILL EMMERSON | Redlands

Appointed to the Commission by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in December 2018. Former senior vice president of state relations and advocacy at the California Hospital Association, State Senator from 2010 to 2013, State Assemblymember from 2004 to 2010, and orthodontist.

ASM. CHAD MAYES | Yucca Valley

Appointed to the Commission by Speaker of the Assembly Toni Atkins in September 2015. Elected in November 2014 to represent the 42nd Assembly District. Represents Beaumont, Hemet, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, San Jacinto, Twentynine Palms, Yucaipa, Yucca Valley, and surrounding areas.

SEN. JIM NIELSEN | Gerber

Appointed to the Commission by the Senate Rules Committee in March 2019. Elected in January 2013 to represent the 4th Senate District. Represents Chico, Oroville, Paradise, Red Bluff, Yuba City, and surrounding areas.

ASM. BILL QUIRK | Hayward

Appointed to the Commission by Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon in 2017. Elected in November 2012 to represent the 20th Assembly District. Represents Hayward, Union City, Castro Valley, San Lorenzo, Ashland, Cherryland, Fairview, Sunol, and North Fremont.

SEN. RICHARD ROTH | Riverside

Appointed to the Commission by the Senate Rules Committee in February 2013. Elected in November 2012 to represent the 31st Senate District. Represents Corona, Coronita, Eastvale, El Cerrito, Highgrove, Home Gardens, Jurupa Valley, March Air Reserve Base, Mead Valley, Moreno Valley, Norco, Perris, and Riverside.

CATHY SCHWAMBERGER | Calistoga

Appointed to the Commission by the Senate Rules Committee in April 2018 and reappointed in January 2019. Associate general counsel for State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company. Former board member of the Civil Justice Association of California and the Capital Political Action Committee.

JANNA SIDLEY | Los Angeles

Appointed to the Commission by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in April 2016 and reappointed in February 2020. General counsel at the Port of Los Angeles since 2013. Former deputy city attorney at the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office from 2003 to 2013.

Full biographies are available on the Commission's website at www.lhc.ca.gov.

“DEMOCRACY ITSELF IS A PROCESS OF CHANGE, AND SATISFACTION AND COMPLACENCY ARE ENEMIES OF GOOD GOVERNMENT.”

By Governor Edmund G. “Pat” Brown,
addressing the inaugural meeting of the Little Hoover Commission,
April 24, 1962, Sacramento, California



Milton Marks Commission on California State
Government Organization and Economy

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