

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

### WHY IT MATTERS

While substance abuse does not cause domestic violence, there is a statistical correlation between the two issues.<sup>1</sup> Studies of domestic violence frequently indicate high rates of alcohol and other drug use by perpetrators during abuse.<sup>2</sup> Not only do batterers tend to abuse drugs and alcohol, but domestic violence also increases the probability that victims will use alcohol and drugs to cope with abuse.<sup>3</sup> The issues of domestic violence and substance abuse can interact with and exacerbate each other and should be treated simultaneously.<sup>4</sup>

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Regular alcohol abuse is one of the leading risk factors for intimate partner violence.<sup>5</sup>
- A battering incident that is coupled with alcohol abuse may be more severe and result in greater injury.<sup>6</sup>
- Alcoholic women are more likely to report a history of childhood physical and emotional abuse than are nonalcoholic women.<sup>7</sup>
- Domestic violence and drug and alcohol addiction frequently occur together, but no evidence suggests a causal relationship between substance abuse and domestic violence.<sup>8</sup>
- Alcoholism treatment does not "cure" abusive behavior.<sup>9</sup>
- Women who have been abused are fifteen times more likely to abuse alcohol and nine times more likely to abuse drugs than women who have not been abused.<sup>10</sup>
- In 2002, the Department of Justice found that 36% of victims in domestic violence programs also had substance abuse problems.<sup>11</sup>
- 51% of domestic violence program directors agree that a woman's use of alcohol can be a barrier to leaving a violent relationship.<sup>12</sup>
- 87% of domestic violence program directors agree that the risk of intimate partner violence increases when both partners abuse alcohol or drugs.<sup>13</sup>
- The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse found that 69% of women in treatment for substance abuse say they were sexually abused as children.<sup>14</sup>

### SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND BATTERERS

- The U.S. Department of Justice found that 61% of domestic violence offenders also have substance abuse problems.<sup>15</sup>
- Batterers living with women who have alcohol abuse problems often try to justify their violence as a way to control their victims when they are drunk.<sup>16</sup>
- Men who batter frequently use alcohol abuse as an excuse for their violence. They attempt to rid themselves of responsibility for their violence by blaming it on the effects of alcohol.<sup>17</sup>
- A 1994 study conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice on murder in families found that more than half of defendants accused of murdering their spouses had been drinking alcohol at the time of the incident.<sup>18</sup>

### SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND CHILDREN

- Children of substance abusing parents are more likely to experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse than children in non-substance abusing households.<sup>19</sup>
- A survey of public child welfare agencies conducted by the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse found that as many as 80% of child abuse cases are associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs.<sup>20</sup>
- Children who have experienced family violence are at greater risk for alcohol and other drug problems later in life than children who do not experience family violence.<sup>21</sup>
- Evidence suggests that children who run away from violent homes are at risk of substance abuse.<sup>22</sup>

## SERVICES FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE<sup>23</sup>

Although there is no causal link between domestic violence and substance abuse, the failure to deal with domestic violence in substance abuse treatment programs or to deal with substance abuse in domestic violence programs interferes with the effectiveness of these programs. Many service providers recognize the correlation between substance abuse and domestic violence, but few domestic violence programs can offer adequate counseling or health services for substance abusers.

*There are many reasons for the absence of substance abuse treatment programs within domestic violence services:*

- Domestic violence programs typically have limited resources and cannot afford to pay for the equipment, staff, and other resources needed to provide substance abuse programs.
- Domestic violence programs primarily focus on providing safety and shelter.
- There is a fear that focusing on the substance abuse problems of victims will encourage victim blaming.

*In 2004, the Department of Justice found that:*

- 80% of domestic violence programs that cannot provide substance abuse treatment programs for victims or abusers refer them to substance abuse treatment programs in their communities.
- 92% of domestic violence programs would like to begin or continue working with substance abuse treatment facilities to develop enhanced services for substance-abusing women.

*When domestic violence programs were asked why they did not provide substance abuse treatment:*

- 75% of programs cited a lack of financial resources.
- 71% of programs cited a lack of staff resources.
- 60% of programs cited a lack of experience dealing with substance abuse problems.

*To improve treatment for individuals with both substance abuse and domestic violence problems, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment recommends:*

- Providing more federal funding for programs to be able to provide these much needed services in shelters.
- Furthering efforts to link domestic violence and substance abuse treatment programs in human services systems and to provide counseling, child care, substance abuse and mental health treatment, among other services, in one program.
- Creating mechanisms for interagency cooperation at the state and local level.
- Funding demonstration projects to test the feasibility and effectiveness of linking domestic violence and substance abuse treatment programs.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information or to get help, contact  
**The National Alcohol and Substance Abuse Information Call Center** at 1-800-784-6776  
or visit [www.addictioncareoptions.com](http://www.addictioncareoptions.com).

**The National Domestic Violence Hotline** at 1-800-799-SAFE or visit [www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org).

## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> Fazzone, Patricia Anne, et al. "Substance Abuse Treatment and Domestic Violence: Treatment Improvement Protocol." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information.

<sup>2,3</sup> "Making the Link: Domestic Violence & Alcohol and Other Drugs." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information.

<sup>4</sup> Fazzone, Patricia Anne, et al.

<sup>5</sup> "Connecticut Clearinghouse. "Making the Link Between Alcohol and Other Drugs and Domestic Violence" Plainville, CT: A Program of the Wheeler Clinic. [www.ctclearinghouse.org](http://www.ctclearinghouse.org).

<sup>6</sup> Women's Rural Advocacy Programs. "Alcohol Abuse and Domestic Violence." [www.letswrap.com](http://www.letswrap.com).

<sup>7</sup> National Institutes of Health, National Library of Medicine. "Effects of Domestic Violence on Substance Abuse Treatment." [www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov).

<sup>8</sup> Alle-Kiski HOPE Center. "Alcohol Abuse and Domestic Violence." [www.akhopecenter.org](http://www.akhopecenter.org).

<sup>9</sup> Women's Rural Advocacy Programs.

<sup>10</sup> Shipway, Lyn. (2004) "Domestic Violence: A Handbook for Health Professionals."

<sup>11, 12, 13</sup> Collins, James J. and Donna L. Spencer. (2002) "Linkage of Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Services, Research in Brief, Executive Summary." U.S. Department of Justice.

<sup>14</sup> Online News Hour. "Substance Abuse Rises in Women." April 21, 2006. [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/health/jan-june06/dependency\\_4-21.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/health/jan-june06/dependency_4-21.html)

<sup>15</sup> Collins, James J. and Donna L. Spencer. (2002) "Linkage of Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Services, Research in Brief, Executive Summary." U.S. Department of Justice.

<sup>16</sup> Women's Rural Advocacy Programs.

<sup>17</sup> Alle-Kiski HOPE Center.

<sup>18</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1994) "Violence Between Intimates: Domestic Violence." NCJ Pub. No. NCJ-149259. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2002) "Substance Abuse and Child Maltreatment." National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect and Information.

<sup>20</sup> McCurdy, K., and Daro, D. (1994) "Current Trends in Child Abuse Reporting and Fatalities: The Results of the 1993 Annual Fifty State Survey." Chicago: National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse.

<sup>21, 22</sup> County of Yolo. "Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse."

<sup>23</sup> Collins, James J. and Donna L. Spencer. (2002) "Linkage of Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Services, Research in Brief, Executive Summary." U.S. Department of Justice.

For more information please see our website at [ncadv.org](http://ncadv.org)



The Public Policy Office of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) is a national leader in the effort to create and influence Federal legislation that positively affects the lives of domestic violence victims and children. We work closely with advocates at the local, state and national level to identify the issues facing domestic violence victims, their children and the people who serve them and to develop a legislative agenda to address these issues. NCADV welcomes you to join us in our effort to end domestic violence.