

Creating A Safer Texas:

Understanding Family Violence Non-Residential Service Impact

This brief uses data from the “Creating A Safer Texas: Understanding Family Violence Non-Residential Service Use and Impact” report, a collaborative research project between Texas Council on Family Violence, Texas Health and Human Services Commission, University of Texas Medical Branch Center for Violence Prevention, and University of Texas Arlington School of Social Work.

Project findings indicate family violence services had impacts in five primary domains:



SAFETY



HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH



ECONOMICS & HOUSING



LEGAL NEEDS



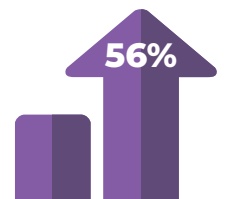
SUPPORTIVE CONNECTIONS



Safety

Family violence services help improve survivor and child safety and reduce risks for future violence through flexible, ongoing and inclusive safety planning.

- » **Family violence services improve safety knowledge.** Over 65% of surveyed survivors reported strong knowledge of community resources for safety and 71% reported a plan for improving safety.
- » **Family violence services enhance survivor feelings of safety.** Survey participants reported a 56% increase in feelings of overall safety after family violence service use.



“I hope [the family violence agency] NEVER closes because they are literally saving lives... [I am] grateful for everything they do, not just for me, but for everyone else. The [agency] has been the best thing for me in my darkest season.”

– SURVIVOR

- » **Safety planning helps survivors and children meet their needs.** Of those who received family violence hotline services, 83% rated services as helpful or very helpful and 82% of those who received safety planning support while in services rated it as helpful or very helpful.
- » **Experiences of violence decreased after service use.** Only 8% reported sexual victimization and 12.5% reported physical violence after using family violence services.
- » **Safety impacts were limited** by a lack of consistent economic and housing services, inconsistent BIPP access, and a need for more effective supports to address stalking.



Health & Mental Health

Family violence services improved physical and mental health. The majority of survey and interview participants were able to get the mental or physical health support they needed from family violence services.

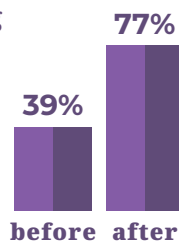
- » Survey and interview participants identified **counseling as the most impactful health service.**



“It’s counseling for me, the therapy, that has helped me tremendously to combat the trauma.”

– SURVIVOR

- » **Survivors’ health and wellbeing increased.** There was a 38% increase in survivors reporting good health (from 39% to 77%) after family violence service use.



- » Among survey participants, those who felt more in control of their safety and safety plan reported less somatic and depression symptoms.
- » **More physical health services are needed.** Among surveyed survivors, referrals for physical health services were the most likely health or mental health service needed, but not received.

- » **Factors that create barriers** to greater health and mental health are: session limits on counseling, a lack of culturally and developmentally adapted and appropriate models, and waitlists. Especially in rural areas, counseling access issues created by a lack of providers and transportation was a persistent issue.



Economics & Housing

Family violence agencies helped get survivors resources they need. Support for housing, financial assistance, and connections to other community organizations help survivors address their needs, promote trust with the family violence agency, and improve safety.

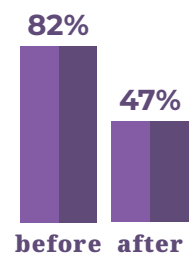
- » Ninety percent (90%) of survivors surveyed reported that staff actively worked to **connect them with community resources.**



“I got resources, lots of resources. The agency sets you up to succeed.”

– SURVIVOR

- » **Family violence service use decreased reported episodes of homelessness.** Over 82% had been homeless at least once before using family violence program services. Nearly half (47%) had been homeless at least once since working with the family violence agency.



- » **Direct cash assistance was identified as instrumental in stability and safety impacts.** However, only 27% of survey participants reported receiving cash assistance.
- » Access to stable housing improves survivor safety and stability, but housing assistance is often not accessible. Of all family violence services included in the TCSS survey, housing and food support were the most frequently reported as needed but not available.

Legal Needs

Survivors reported working with family violence agencies related to a wide range of legal needs including divorce, protective orders, financial assistance for legal costs, and child custody.

- » Family violence services help survivors access protective orders. Forty-one percent (41%) of surveyed survivors currently or previously had a protective order against a partner, with an additional 10% waiting for a hearing.

“My attorney [at the family violence agency] is the best of the best, not only is she fighting with me to get a protective order, she is fighting for my children and I. You would have thought I paid this attorney like half a million and I’m not exaggerating. She’s helping taking all my worries and fears away.”

– SURVIVOR

- » Strong majorities of participants who received legal support around divorce, child custody, visitation, or child support considered that support helpful or very helpful.

- » **Family violence services help survivors understand their legal options.** Fifty-one percent (51%) indicated they had received family violence agency help related to getting information about legal rights and options.



- » Legal needs, especially related to children and immigration, were primary concerns for survivors, but even in communities with legal aid and other low-income civil legal services, program accessibility and wait times remain a pressing issue.

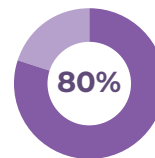
Supportive Connections

Advocacy provides a “web of support” for survivors to have their needs met. Survivors report that family violence staff are supportive, encouraging, and non-judgmental.

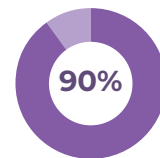
- » **Survivors report feeling that family violence agencies are responsive to their unique needs.** Among survey respondents, 89% of participants felt that their cultural background was respected at the agency and 80% felt that family violence staff understand how discrimination and injustice impact experiences of family violence.

- » **Initial and ongoing access are crucial to family violence service impact.** Insensitive treatment from staff, and session and service limits can negatively impact these outcomes.

- » **Survivors report trust and satisfaction with family violence services.** Among survey participants, 89% rated advocacy/case management services as helpful or very helpful. Over 80% of survivors surveyed reported they would use family violence services again if needed, and 90% would recommend family violence services to friends, family, or others in their community.



would use again



would recommend to others

- » Survey participants who reported more social supports also endorsed more confidence in their ability to stay safer. Higher levels of social support were also associated with improved service experiences.

“I didn’t know there were selfless people willing to help the community. For me that is—without being family, without being friends, this is good because it shows you there are good people in the world that help others... Selflessly. It’s free, it’s there when you need it.”

– SURVIVOR

Access full report and executive summary at tcfv.org/publications/