

Empowering Domestic Violence Survivors Within the Family Courts

1 in 4
women



1 in 7
men



experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime

Most domestic violence (DV) survivors enter the family court system in a crisis state. DV-focused programs embedded within the court can offer supportive services, reduce the stress of engaging with the court, and empower survivors to navigate their cases.

Seven Steps to Creating a Program to Empower DV Survivors

1. Lay the Groundwork



- Secure funding from multiple sources
- Build rapport and partnerships with stakeholders
- Set up a safe, restricted-access office space co-located within the court

2. Identify the Target Population



- Be prepared to serve a wide variety of DV survivors with cultural sensitivity

3. Develop a Case Flow Process



- Warmly welcome DV survivors with a client-centered approach
- Match clients with a case manager
- Follow up with high-risk clients

4. Determine the Staffing Required



- Likely roles include
 - Leadership: advocate
 - Director: supervisor
 - Front desk staff: first responder
 - Case manager: client coordinator
- Reflect community diversity

5. Develop a Training and Supervision Plan



- Use progressive training (coursework, shadowing, observation)
- Set supervision expectations (include reflective supervision as needed)

6. Continuous Quality Improvement



- Compile and analyze metrics of program effectiveness and design fidelity

7. Examine Potential Barriers and Facilitators



- Barriers to address
 - Community stigma
 - Fear of deportation, language barriers
 - Financial, housing dependence on harming party
 - Hesitance to engage with courts
 - Misperceptions of program offerings



- Facilitators to leverage
 - Collaboration with partner agencies
 - Professional development and self-care
 - Community outreach about program benefits

