

Domestic Violence

*...and women with low incomes***

high rates of violence

- Examining one low-income neighborhood in Chicago, researchers found that **33% of welfare recipients and 25% of low-income non-recipients** had experienced “severe aggression” in adulthood by a partner.¹
- The National Family Violence Survey suggested that rates of “**abusive violence**” to women with annual incomes below \$10,000 are more than 3.5 times those found in households with incomes over \$40,000.²

complex lives

- In their excellent book, *Safety Planning with Battered Women: Complex Lives/Difficult Choices* (1998), Jill Davies and her colleagues define two types of risks that battered women face: batterer-generated and life-generated risks. Risks from the batterer include physical injury, threats, and loss of security, housing, income, and potentially children. Life-generated risks center around economic, social, and individual circumstances. For poor women, life-generated risks can also include debt and poor credit, lack of health insurance, limited access to health care, racism, dangerous neighborhoods, and inadequate schools for their children.
- Traditional solutions to ending domestic violence have tended to focus solely on stopping physical assault and largely on leaving the abusive partner. They presume that battered women want to leave and that violence is the woman’s major concern. For women in poverty, these presumptions may be false. Their lives are often more complicated, with fewer resources and often with fewer choices.

limited choices

- Both leaving and staying with an abusive partner create risks and cost women, especially poor women. If the woman leaves, she may have to give up affordable housing, friends and neighbors, and the additional income, childcare or transportation that her partner or friends and neighbors provide. Her life could end up to be worse.
- While many helping professionals think of her safety solely in physical terms and, as a result, urge her to leave the violence, she may think of her safety more broadly. Safety for her may be food, shelter, or a ride to work or the clinic.

you can help

Social workers are in a unique position to be able to help women who are being abused. Ask about abuse directly but gently, and offer the use of your phone to call the Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline. You could be saving a life.



** Taken from: “Expanding Solutions for Domestic Violence & Poverty: What Battered Women with Abused Children Need from Their Advocates” by Susan Schechter (December 2000).

¹Lloyd, S., & N. Taluc. 1999. The effects of male violence on female employment. *Violence Against Women* 5: 370-92.

²Straus, M. A., & Gelles, R. J. (Eds.). (1990). *Physical violence in American families*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.