

In many cases, health care providers are the first responders treating abuse. Assessment and referral for abuse is critical for the health and safety of patients.

Physical injuries from intimate partner violence include facial fractures, dental injuries, bruises, strains, neurological injuries, and concussions. Women often hide how the injuries occurred.

Health consequences that can result from abuse include physical disability, post-traumatic stress symptoms, anxiety and depression, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, and eating disorders.

Recognizing and Responding to Intimate Partner Violence as a Health Care Provider

- In Oklahoma, an estimated 21% of non-institutionalized adult women and 10% of adult men have been physically assaulted by an intimate partner at some time in their lifetime (*Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*).
- On average, 44 Oklahoma residents die each year in intimate partner homicide incidents (*Oklahoma Violent Death Reporting System*).
- It is estimated that for every woman 18-44 years of age killed in an intimate partner violence homicide in Oklahoma:
 - more than 100 women are treated in hospitals for assault related injuries
 - more than 1,000 women are assaulted and injured who do not receive treatment for their injuries (*Oklahoma Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance*).
- Physical injuries from intimate partner violence include facial fractures, dental injuries, bruises, strains, neurological injuries, and concussions.
- Health consequences from abuse include physical disability, post-traumatic stress symptoms, anxiety, depression, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, and eating disorders.
- The longer the abuse goes on, the more serious the effects.

What can Health Care Providers Do to Help?

- Routine assessment by health care providers is important because it may take several visits for patients to feel secure enough to disclose their abuse.
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for disclosure.
- Learn to recognize signs of physical and emotional abuse.
- Provide appropriate referrals to services. Training is available on talking to patients about abuse, recognizing signs of abuse, documenting the medical record, and referring patients to the appropriate services for care.
- Establish a partnership with the domestic violence services provider in your area. A list of certified service providers is available at <http://www.ocadvsa.org>.
- Establish safety protocols and organizational policies on appropriate treatment and referral of patients who are suffering from domestic abuse. Implement the policies through training.

Resources

- Health Care and Domestic Violence Materials are available from Futures without Violence, <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org>
- Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, <http://www.ocadvsa.org/>
- National Institute of Justice, *Research in Brief, Documenting Domestic Violence: How Health Providers can Help Victims*, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/188564.pdf>
- Danger Assessment Instrument, <https://www.dangerassessment.org>