



Integrating Health and Wellness into DV Advocacy Program Intake and Case Management

Incorporating questions and information about health into DV Program intake procedure ensures that clients know that advocates are able to support them around health issues and that wellness is just as important as safety.

Time sensitive questions and information that DV Programs should consider including in the initial intake conversation. Some health conversations are more urgent and require a faster time frame given the 5-day efficacy window for emergency contraception (the sooner it's administered the more effective it is) and the fatality risks stemming from strangulation in the hours and days after an assault. Other questions about health information and history should be addressed at a later time that is less overwhelming:

- *Do you have any immediate health needs that we can support you around, such as getting access to any medicine that you need to take?*
- *We offer emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy for people who have had unprotected vaginal intercourse in the past five days and pregnancy testing. Is this something you are interested in hearing more about? – **alternatively if your program does not yet offer emergency contraception** – We are able to support clients in emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy if they have had unprotected vaginal intercourse in the past five days and pregnancy testing. Is this something you are interested in hearing more about?*
- *In the past few days has the person who is hurting you tried to choke or strangle you? I ask because this can sometimes cause serious health problems and death even if it wasn't very painful or if you felt okay when it has happened in the past and it could be important for you to get medical attention, which I can help you with.*
- Provide clients with a list of the health and wellness supports your organization offers:

Medicine cabinet	Health Access	Sexual/Reproductive Health	Wellness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medicine (Ibuprofen, Tylenol, etc) • First aid for cuts, etc. • Medicine for heartburn, diarrhea, nausea, constipation • Melatonin tea for sleeplessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health coverage enrollment support for you and your family • Finding a primary care or mental health provider • Support in scheduling or getting to health appointments • Connection to support for chronic health issues or pain, traumatic brain injury, pregnancy/parenting, substance dependency, etc. • “safety planning” for health visits that could be triggering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnancy test • Emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy (Plan B, “morning after pill”) • Connection to STI/HIV testing and counseling • Condoms, lube, female condom • Information on less detectable birth control methods • Connection to reproductive/sexual health care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly yoga/mindfulness class • Info on where to get low cost veggies, fruit and other food • Monthly health celebrations or education sessions • Weekly visiting nurse • Survivor relaxation room • Support groups and talking circles • Healing ceremonies

If a client hasn't been seen by a primary care provider in some years, there may be other chronic health issues that are undiagnosed. An advocate may work support clients with other health issues in a more flexible timeline so that they don't need to address everything at intake. This includes health insurance enrollment, substance use support, and other nutrition, sleep and wellness support.

- *We are able to support clients and their children to get health insurance coverage – is this something you are interested in or have questions about?*
- *Many of the folks we work with have been prevented from seeing a health care provider for awhile or have not had the time and space to address their health issues. Do you have a health provider who you like and trust? We are able to support clients in seeing a health provider– is this something you are interested in or have questions about? We have a special partnership with [name of clinic partner] and I can help you get an appointment if you would like. Even if you don't have any health issues at this time, now could be a good opportunity to build a relationship with a provider you like and trust and will can save you money down the line by not having to visit the emergency room for routine health issues.*
- *Many of our clients may avoid going to health or dental visits and remembering what their provider tells. If that is familiar for you, we have a brochure with tips to help you have a better visit and find a provider you feel safe and comfortable with. <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/new-resource-survivor-brochure/>*
- *Many survivors of trauma and violence use alcohol or drugs to help cope. Also, often times people who are trying to control their partners use substances and addiction to manipulate them – for example messing with your sobriety/recovery process, pressuring you to use, etc. Is substance use something that you are interested in getting support around? Do you want more information about this? **If your DV Program still has a zero-tolerance policy for substance use, it may be unsafe for survivors to discuss their substance struggles with you. Consider how you can shift your practice and policies to harm reduction. For more information visit: <https://wscadv.org/resources/working-with-battered-women-impacted-by-substance-abuse/> For more information on substance use and mental health coercion visit: <http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/trainingta/>***
- *Many clients find it helpful to talk to a mental health support person like a counselor. We are able to connect you to someone – is this something you are interested in?*
- *Clients who have experienced trauma or injury to the face or head or strangulation/getting choked out may find that it's harder to do everyday things like running errands or getting to appointments, or may find that they are more forgetful, have a hard time sleeping, or controlling their emotions. Does this sound like anything you have been going through? It is helpful for us to know so we can better support you.*