



DELAWARE COALITION
AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Domestic Violence Needs
Assessment: A Survey on Most
Pressing Services, Resources,
and Training Needs**



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DCADV Needs Assessment

The Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCADV) reached out to domestic violence programs, law enforcement, victim advocates, social service providers, therapists and victims/survivors to conduct a needs assessment of domestic violence services. The purpose of the assessment was to learn from those who receive and provide services what resources are needed, which populations are most in need, and how we can improve supports. Our hope in conducting this assessment was to identify services and resources that need strengthening.

The needs assessment was comprised of an online survey and in-person interviews. We asked survey respondents if they would also participate in individual follow-up interviews. The response to the online survey was very good and this publication documents the results using data graphs. Those who were able to participate in the follow-up interview provided insightful information. A summary of these interviews and their major themes is included in this report.

DCADV will share the needs assessment results with everyone who participated in the survey, member programs and funders with the hope that it can provide some guidance in developing collaborations and allocating resources.

We are so appreciative to all of those individuals who took the time to complete the survey and we are especially grateful to those who engaged in the interviews. Your experience, knowledge and insight and, more importantly, your commitment to improving services to victims/survivors is the foundational strength of Delaware's domestic violence services.

DCADV is also grateful to Megan Bittinger, UD intern and DV Practicum student, who worked on this needs assessment project for four months. Her dedication to excellence and her hard work were critical in making this effort a success.

Sue Ryan
Executive Director

Acknowledgement

Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence would like to thank all of the organizations that participated in the Domestic Violence Needs Assessment for your assistance. We appreciate your time in sharing your thoughts and expertise with us. We also want to thank you for the work you do every day serving victim-survivors of domestic violence.

Methodology

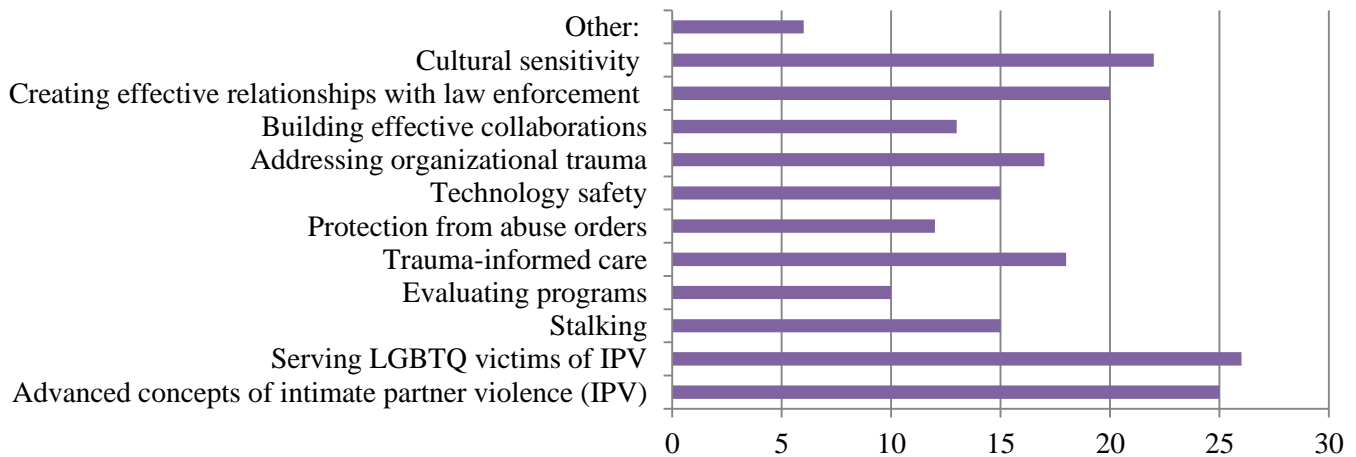
The needs assessment data was collected through a combination of a quantitative online survey and in-person qualitative interviews. The online survey, generated via Survey Monkey, consisted of ten open ended, ranking, and multiple choice questions that covered areas ranging from training topics and formats, the Delaware legal system, community needs, housing, and direct assistance. The survey was sent to sixty-one individuals, with a request to all supervisors or managers that they forward it to all domestic violence services staff. Thirty-six participants completed the online survey, and ten of the participants also completed an in-person follow-up interview. Interviews consisted of eight open-ended questions and were approximately thirty to forty-five minutes in length. All interviews were recorded with signed permission of the participant. The online survey questions and the in-person interview questions are included in the appendix.

DCADV Needs Assessment project was funded through the federal Family Violence and Services Prevention Act (FVPSA) grants, 2016-2017.

Online Quantitative Survey Results

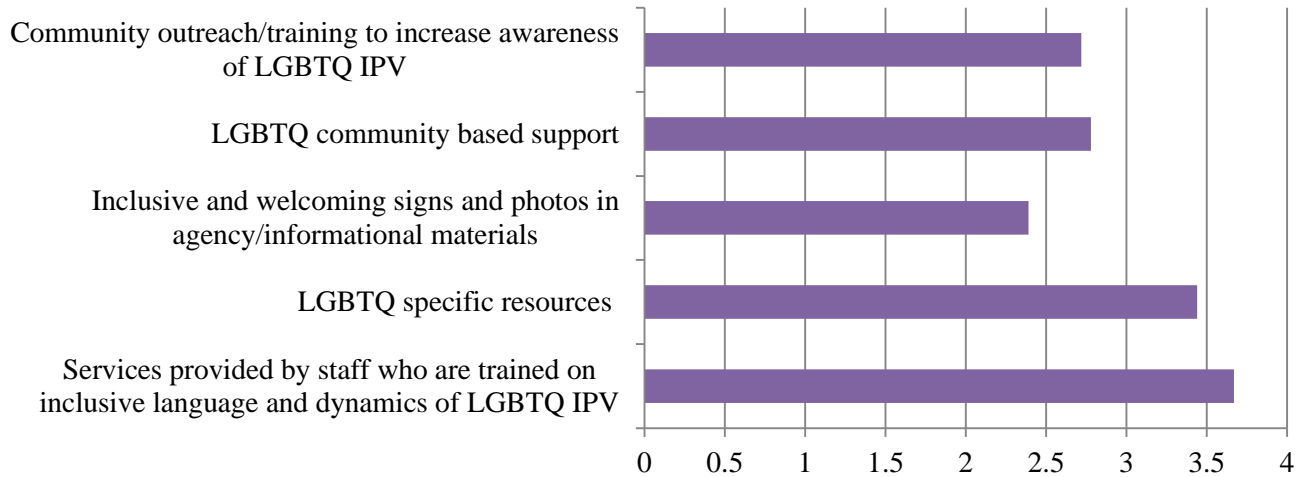
The participants of the online survey were first asked to **select a range of training topics they believe their organization would benefit from**, selected from a provided list. The responses indicated the greatest needs for training include “serving LGBTQ victims of intimate partner violence (IPV)”, “advanced concepts of IPV”, and “cultural sensitivity.” “Other” answers included, “creating healthy boundaries/handling crisis in case management, dynamics of intimate partner violence and connecting the dots to other violent crimes, trauma neurobiology, assisting mothers in parenting once free from violent partner, overwhelming transportation issues, confidentiality, FVSPA, VOCA and Federal/State Homeless Certification.” Survey participants also identified that off-site in-person trainings with multiple organizations in attendance are the most helpful training format for their organizations (*see graph chart: Training Formats Most Helpful, on page 10, Appendix B*).

What training topics would be most helpful to your organization to serve victims of domestic violence (DV)?

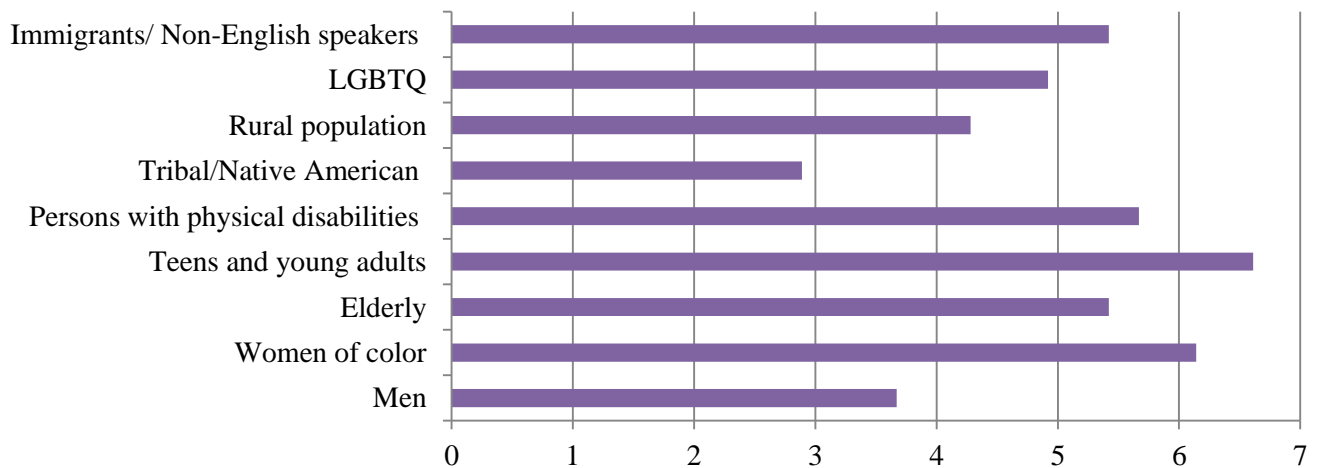


The following five questions asked participants to rank existing needs from greatest to lowest. When asked to **rank needed legal system changes**, participants identified the greatest needs as “increased accountability for offenders in court” and “increased police training on identifying and responding to domestic violence (DV)”, followed by, “effective prosecution,” (*See graph chart on page 11, Appendix B*). When asked to **rank the needs of LGBTQ victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)**, participants ranked as the highest need “services provided by staff who are trained on inclusive language and dynamics of LGBTQ IPV,” followed by “LGBTQ specific resources,” and “LGBTQ community based support,” (*See graph chart on page 4*). When **ranking communities in need**, “teens and young adults” was identified as the group most in need of support, followed by “women of color” and “persons with physical disabilities,” (*See graph chart on page 4*).

Rank the following needs of LGBTQ victims of IPV

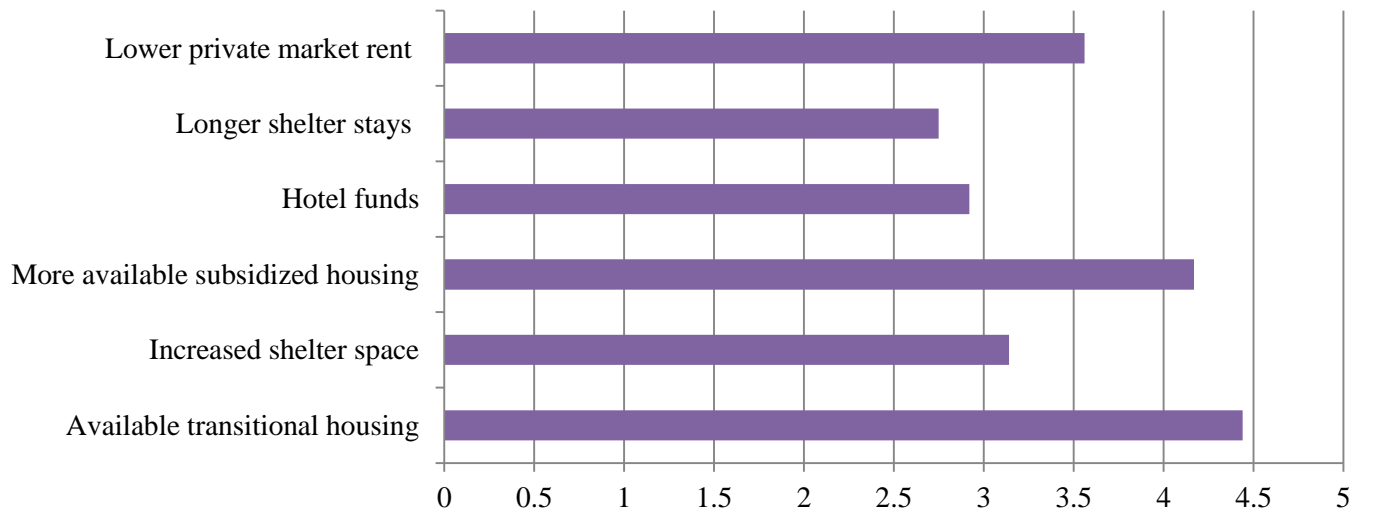


Rank the following communities in need of your organization's support

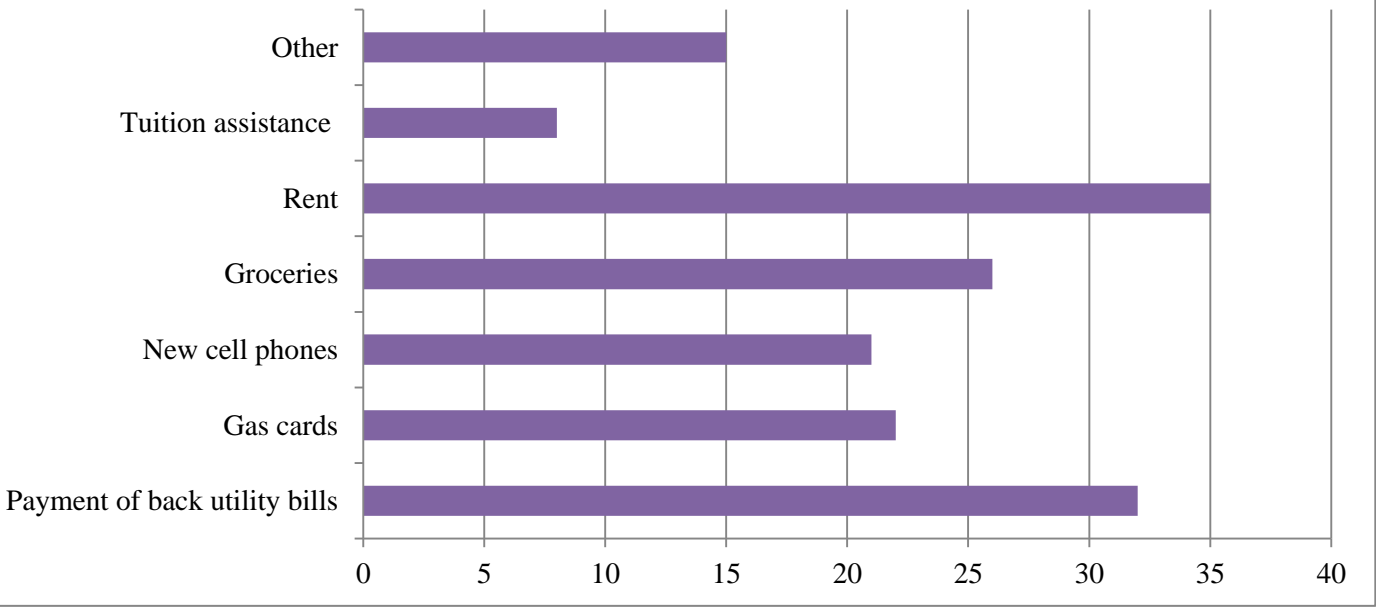


In ranking service needs for the domestic violence victims their organization serves, “housing” was identified as the greatest, followed by “legal services” and “transportation,” (See graph chart on page 11, Appendix B). Lastly, when **housing needs were ranked by participants**, “available transitional housing” was identified as the greatest need, followed by “more available subsidized housing” and “lower private market rent,” (See graph chart on page 5). The final question asked participants to **select what forms of Direct Assistance, were most needed by the DV victims** their organization serves. The most needed form of Direct Assistance was identified as “rent”, followed by “payment of back utility bills” and “groceries,” (See graph chart on page 5). “Other” answers provided for needed forms of Direct Assistance included: “public transportation vouchers, clothing, job training and assistance, pet care support, child care, car repair, insurance, storage spaces, attorney fees, toiletries, assistance obtaining birth certificates, security deposits, medical costs, phone cards, first month’s rent.”

Rank the following housing needs for the DV victims your organization serves



What forms of Direct Assistance are most needed by the DV victims your organization serves?



**Additional graphs available in Appendix B*

In-Person Interview Findings

Ten domestic violence service providers participated in an in-person individual interview following the completion of the online survey. Participants' positions ranged from shelter advocates and management, police based victim services, private counselors, case managers, and law enforcement. The following themes were identified as significant, with a minimum of seven of the ten interview participants discussing the need or topic during the interview.

Theme 1: Communication and Understanding: *Getting People Around the Table*

Seven out of the ten interview participants identified the need for greater understanding, communication and collaboration between all individuals and agencies serving domestic violence victims. They shared that there is a need for an overall understanding of “who does what,” everyone's roles and limitations of those roles, and the dynamics of domestic violence.

Specifically, there is a lack of understanding of what domestic violence agencies do, and what people can and cannot do within their agencies. One particular gap is a lack of knowledge around the difference in law enforcement responses and advocate responses to domestic violence. There is a need for law enforcement to understand the advocate's role and the advocate to understand law enforcement's response. Although both law enforcement and the advocate interact with the DV victim, there is not always a coordinated response. Also, within the advocacy community there is some misunderstanding of the roles of community advocates and police based advocates. Community based advocates may not be fully aware of the restraints and limitations of police based advocates or assume police based advocates will “side with the officers.” There is a need to bring together the DV service community to increase the understanding of domestic violence, the roles of advocates, and the limitations of law enforcement responses and police based advocates.

Suggested solutions to address the gaps in understanding included the idea of roundtable discussions to clarify roles and responses and to coordinate efforts. Delaware's size and close-knit advocacy community as a whole allows for advocates to call on one another, but there remains a need for everyone to come together to have open discussion and education on roles and ways to improve coordination.

Theme 2: Law Enforcement Responses to Domestic Violence

Eight of the ten interview participants also identified gaps in law enforcement responses to domestic violence, specifically referencing negatively handled police interactions, a need for training, and a need for trauma informed approaches.

Participants discussed communications with DV victims that recounted negative interactions with law enforcement. Examples centered on police officers minimizing the domestic violence, interviewing victims in a non-trauma informed way, and an inconsistent response from police.

Suggested solutions included the need for trainings that are accessible to officers. The trainings should address the dynamics of domestic violence and the importance of responding in a way that does not minimize it. The trainings should empower the officers to interview victims who are experiencing trauma, in a trauma informed way.

Theme 3: Legal System Responses to Domestic Violence

Lastly, nine of the ten participants identified gaps in legal system responses to domestic violence cases. Overall, the major concerns included lack of funding, lack of clarity and transparency within the legal system and the need for increased accountability for offenders.

Many participants made a point to acknowledge that legal aid is available for victims who cannot afford attorneys, but there are not enough attorneys and those that are available, are overworked. This creates a gap in the legal system, forcing victims to build their own case and represent themselves.

For victims who are able to access the legal system, there is no clear communication about how the legal system works or how their case moves through the system. There are also no guidelines available to survivors for navigating the legal system or utilizing legal resources. Additionally, there needs to be a better computer system for victims to get information about their case.

Domestic violence criminal cases are not always taken seriously. Specifically, cases are pleaded out, bail is set too low, there are no real repercussions for offenders, and offenders are not held accountable. One of the reasons cases are downgraded to lesser charges, is that domestic violence does not fit into current laws. For example, “offensive touching” does not include the scope of physical and emotional violence that exists within abusive relationships. Delaware laws need to be updated to address dynamics of domestic violence, such as psychological affects and power and control use in abusive relationships.

Additional Priority: Healthy Relationships Prevention Education

Five of the ten participants addressed the need for prevention education centered on healthy and respectful relationships for teens and young adults. Participants pointed to a gap in services for young people in school who would benefit from a healthy relationships curriculum that focuses on respect in all relationships, not just intimate partners.

Suggested solutions included: a healthy relationships group for teens, support groups discussing healthy boundaries and abuse dynamics, and youth advocates and school resource officers involved in prevention education in schools.

Appendix A

Online Survey Questions

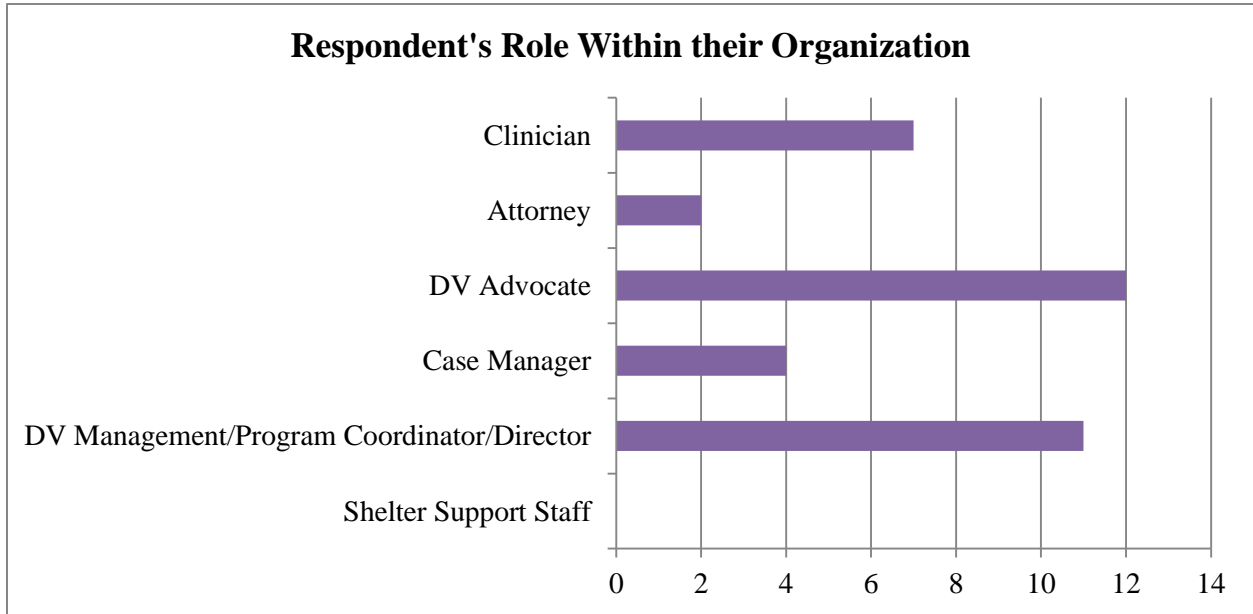
*indicates a required question

1. Your name
2. *Organization name
3. *Your role within your organization
 - a. Shelter support staff
 - b. Domestic violence management/program coordinator/director
 - c. Case manager
 - d. Domestic violence advocate
 - e. Attorney
 - f. Clinician
4. *What training topics would be most helpful to your organization to serve victims of domestic violence (DV)? (Select all that apply)
 - a. Advanced concepts of intimate partner violence (IPV)
 - b. Serving LGBTQ victims of IPV
 - c. Stalking
 - d. Evaluating programs
 - e. Trauma-informed care
 - f. Protection from abuse orders
 - g. Technology safety
 - h. Addressing organizational trauma
 - i. Building effective collaborations
 - j. Creating effective relationships with law enforcement
 - k. Cultural sensitivity
 - l. Other:
5. *What training format(s) are most helpful for your organization? (Select all that apply)
 - a. Webinar
 - b. In-person training designed specifically for your organization
 - c. Off-site in-person with multiple organizations in attendance
 - d. Other:
6. *Rank the following legal system changes that need to occur, to support your organization's work, from highest need (1) to lowest need (9)
 - a. Increased accountability for offenders in court
 - b. Increased police training on identifying and responding to DV
 - c. Greater number of custody and divorce attorneys able to serve victims
 - d. Reduced arrest of victims
 - e. Increased accountability for offenders on probation
 - f. More effective prosecution
 - g. Increased supervised visitation
 - h. Increased identification and investigation of stalking
 - i. Increased batterer intervention programming
7. Additional comments for legal system changes
8. *Rank the following needs of LGBTQ victims of IPV from highest need (1) to lowest need (5)
 - a. Services provided by staff who are trained on inclusive language and dynamics of LGBTQ IPV
 - b. LGBTQ specific resources
 - c. Inclusive and welcoming signs and photos in agency/informational materials

- d. LGBTQ community based support
 - e. Community outreach/training to increase awareness of LGBTQ IPV
9. Additional comments for LGBTQ victims' needs
10. *Rank the following communities in need of your organization's support from highest need (1) to lowest need (9)
- a. Men
 - b. Women of color
 - c. Elderly
 - d. Teens and young adults
 - e. Persons with physical disabilities
 - f. Tribal/Native American
 - g. Rural population
 - h. LGBTQ
 - i. Immigrants/ Non-English speakers
11. Additional comments for communities in need of support
12. *Rank the following service needs from highest need (1) to lowest need (6) for the DV victims your organization serves
- a. Immigration (DACA, U-Visa, status, legal resources)
 - b. Transportation
 - c. Housing (transitional, low cost, permanent)
 - d. Language (services and resources for non-English speakers)
 - e. Shelter
 - f. Legal Services (protection from abuse orders)
13. Additional comments for service needs
14. *Rank the following housing needs from highest need (1) to lowest need (6) for the DV victims your organization serves
- a. Available transitional housing
 - b. Increased shelter space
 - c. More available subsidized housing
 - d. Hotel funds
 - e. Longer shelter stays
 - f. Lower private market rent
15. Additional comments for housing needs
16. *What forms of Direct Assistance are most needed by the DV victims your organization serves?
(Select all that apply)
- a. Payment of back utility bills
 - b. Gas cards
 - c. New cell phones
 - d. Groceries
 - e. Rent
 - f. Tuition assistance
 - g. Other
17. *Would you be willing to participate in a 30 minute in-person interview?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
18. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments?

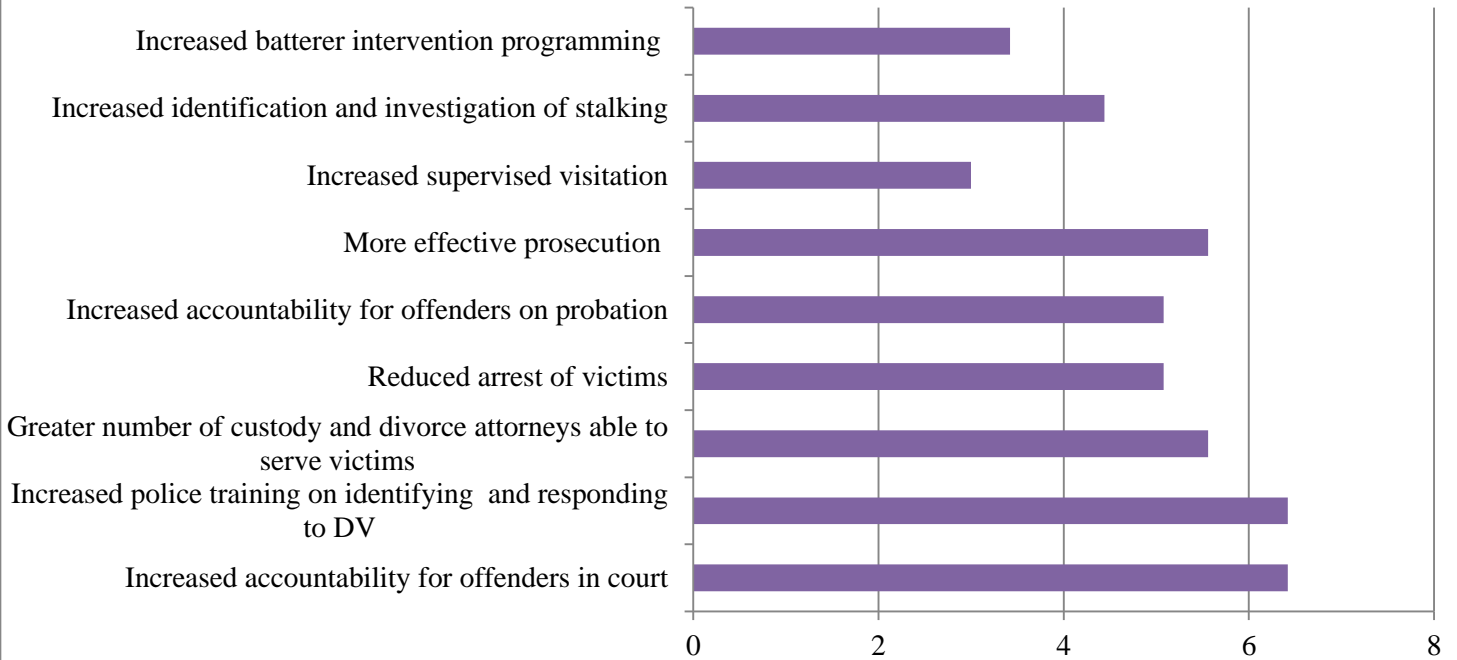
Appendix B

Additional Online Survey Results

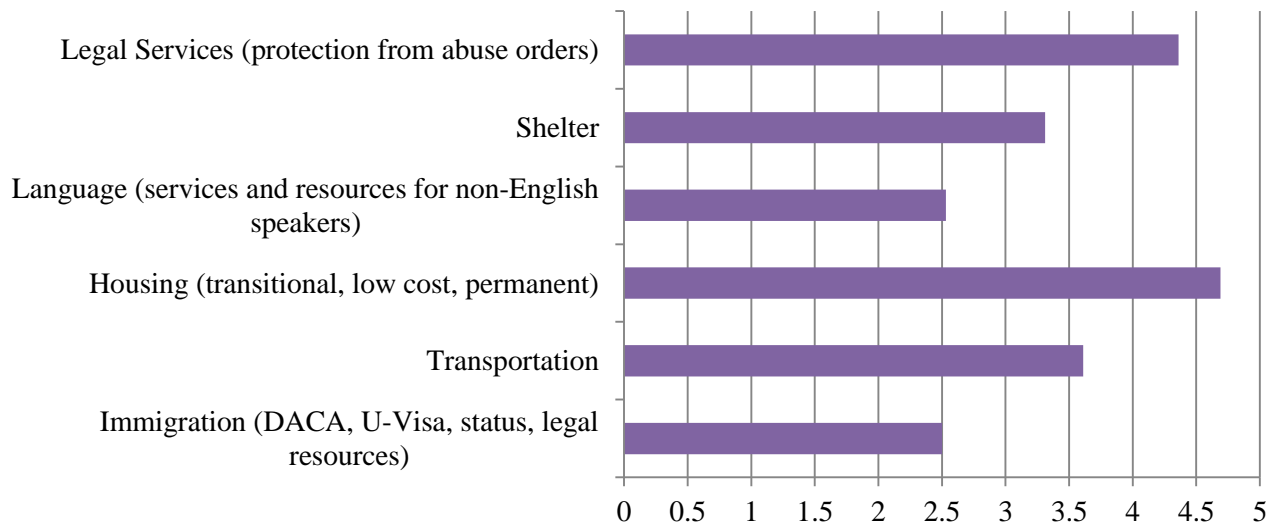


Other: Peer to peer training/train the trainer, all formats, it is always good for staff to interact with other advocates

Rank the following legal system changes that need to occur, to support your organization's work



Rank the following service needs for the DV victims your organization serves



Appendix C

In-Person Interview Questions

Name:

Organization:

Start Time:

End Time:

1. What services are working well?
2. What gaps in services or resources is your organization currently experiencing? What is your organization doing to address these gaps?
3. In what areas does your organization need more collaboration? Who do you need to collaborate with?
4. How would your organization expand current successful and effective programs or responses if they had increased funding or stable long-term funding?
5. What are some specific system wide changes or policy changes you would like to see happen? How would they help?
6. When victim-survivors can't get to you, how can you reach them where they are?
7. Do you feel there are enough mental health and substance abuse professionals who understand the dynamics of domestic violence?
8. Where do you see the needs for training? What topics?