

PROVIDER GUIDE: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV) DURING PREGNANCY

This guide is designed to help health and human service professionals provide support and safety planning for people experiencing IPV during pregnancy.

OBSTACLES THE CLIENT MAY FACE

- Increased danger during pregnancy and after birth
- Physical injury or harm
- Emotional or financial abuse
- Fear, anxiety, depression
- Partner stalking and monitoring
- Lack of family support/isolation
- Lack of employment/financial resources
- Concern about other children or family members
- Pressure from partner to continue or terminate the pregnancy
- Possible disputes about paternity and child custody



THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN INTERACTING WITH THE CLIENT

Lethality

IPV often increases during pregnancy and after birth, since the abusive partner is perceiving a loss of control over the client (e.g., the fetus can be construed to be “in control” of the next 9 months and beyond).

Stigma

The client may fear being judged. Normalize the experience by routinely screening or talking about relationship dynamics. Introduce the topic with language like, “I talk to all my clients/patients about relationship abuse because it is common and can impact their health and the baby’s health.”

Child Development

It is commonly thought that exposure to violence won’t impact a child under 2. Share the fact that fetuses and infants are impacted just as much or more than older children. Stress hormones from the parent can be passed to the fetus and damage their development. Abuse during pregnancy is often linked to complications, including preterm deliveries.

Medical Appointment Dynamics

It could be a warning sign if the client’s partner answers medical questions for the client or refuses to allow the client to meet with medical professionals alone.

Reproductive Coercion

The client’s partner may interfere with their ability to make their own reproductive and sexual health choices, including with their pregnancy. Clients may be embarrassed to talk about this. Ask your client about their reproductive health goals and how you can support them to achieve them safely.



USEFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK THE CLIENT

When you know your client is experiencing abuse, these questions can help guide how you safety plan with them:

① How do you get to your appointments?

Do you need support with transportation? Even if the client cannot attend prenatal appointments alone or safely disclose to the provider, work with them to strategize ways to get necessary care. If they can disclose, the provider may be able to offer additional support.

② Have you experienced any strangulation/choking recently or in the past?

Strangulation/choking can have lasting impacts on a pregnant person's health and their fetus' health. Let the client know you are very concerned. Call the Philadelphia Domestic Violence Hotline for support with information about resources that may be helpful to the client.

③ Do you feel safe taking the baby home?

If home doesn't feel like a safe choice, work with the client to explore other options, such as domestic violence shelters or staying with family and friends.

④ Do you have concerns about financially supporting your baby?

Recommend local resources for free diapers, formula and/or breastfeeding support, cribs and other supplies for newborn babies (See Resources)

⑤ Do you have concerns about your partner supporting your decision about this pregnancy? Do you have a plan for contraception after this pregnancy?

Discussing contraceptive options with your client can be harm reduction if they are experiencing reproductive coercion. Learn what their goals and concerns are and talk about how you can support their reproductive healthcare decisions.



RESOURCES

Philadelphia Domestic Violence Hotline

1 (866) 723-3014

Confidential help 24/7 with interpretation available. Safety planning and referral to specialized services for IPV.

MATERNAL/FAMILY HEALTH CARE

The Greater Philadelphia Diaper Bank

(215) 919-8500

philadelphiadiaperbank.org

Partnered with 50+ community organizations to supply individuals and families in the Philadelphia area with infant diapers, menstruation products, and adult incontinence products.

Maternity Care Coalition

(215) 972-0700

Maternitycarecoalition.org

Support for families from pregnancy through age 3 with in-home case management, family support, and health education.

National Nurse-Led Care Consortium

(215) 287-2114

nurseledcare.phmc.org

Nurse home visit programs like the Philadelphia Nurse-Family Partnership for first time mothers and the Mabel Morris Family Home Visit Program for families with children under the age of 5.

PA Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

1 (800) WIC-WINS

pawic.com

Nutrition services, breastfeeding support, healthcare and social service referrals, and healthy foods for eligible low-income pregnant and postpartum people.

Philly Loves Families

phillylovesfamilies.com

Online hub of resources for pregnant and postpartum people with information on resources for doula support, breastfeeding, safe sleep, mental health support, webinars, and events, and more.

Philadelphia Health Centers

phila.gov/primary-care/

List of locations, hours and operations can be found on the website.

Turning Points for Children

(215) 875-8200

Turningpointsforchildren.phmc.org

Project FAM! Provides program support and advocacy for parents/caregivers, and programming for young parents/caregivers.

ABORTION CARE

Abortion Liberation Fund of PA

(215) 564-6622

Abortionfundpa.org

Emergency financial support for pregnancy termination.

The PEACE Center

(215) 615-5234

pennmedicine.org

Contraceptive care, abortion care, and pregnancy loss care.

Philadelphia Women's Center

(215) 574-3590

thewomenscenters.com

Outpatient abortion care including surgical and medication abortion.

Planned Parenthood - Locust Street Surgical Center

(215) 351-5550

Plannedparenthood.org

Healthcare including sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment, vaccines, and abortion.

Planned Parenthood Far Northeast Surgical Center

(215) 464-2225

Plannedparenthood.org

Healthcare including sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment, vaccines, and abortion.