Information Needs of Domestic Violence Survivors:
A Preliminary Report

I left with only my clothes and my laptop. I had just enough money for a cheap hotel room. That night I stayed up all night researching Domestic Violence and that's when I found this website. It's very helpful knowing that we are not crazy and there are a lot of women going through the same thing. It's also surprising how many traits these guys have in common. (Survivor, posting)

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February 1, 2007
Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the generous support of the many people who shared with me their time, experience, insights, and wisdom. Since great care has been taken in this document to protect their confidentiality, I have not used any of their names or even identified the city in which they live when using quotations from their interviews. Nevertheless, I would like to share my appreciation of and I am profoundly thankful to the many people from the following organizations, and elsewhere, who spoke with me:

Austin Police Department
Bastrop Police Department
Casa de Misericordia, Laredo
Corpus Christi Police Department
Family Crisis Center, Bastrop
Highland Lakes Family Crisis Center, Marble Falls
Hill Country Crisis Council, Inc., Kerrville
Houston Area Women’s Shelter
Houston Police Department
Kerrville Police Department
Laredo Police Department
Marble Falls Police Department
SafePlace, Austin
Southwest Family Life Center, Hondo
Victoria Police Department
Women’s Shelter of South Texas, Corpus Christi

This research was funded by the University of Texas’s Summer Research Assignment program.
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Executive summary

Coping with or escaping from a violent relationship requires a large number of resources to come together effectively over a substantial period of time for each survivor. Some of those resources are internal, such as developing the belief that escape is indeed possible. Some of those resources are external, such as police who respond to a 911 call or shelter staff who provide a safe harbor. All of those resources, however, require that survivors have accurate, current, appropriate, and useful information. This study identified several information-based factors that promote or hinder survivors’ efforts to escape intimate partner violence (IPV).

Information that successfully supports efforts to move towards a safer life is almost always two-tiered in that it is both emotional and factual. The emotional aspect of the information includes positive messages, examples, facts, and stories that promote or repeat the basic themes of affirmation and encouragement. This emotional aspect includes an affirmation that the survivor is experiencing undeserved and illegal abuse combined with encouragement to build an individualized path to safer living. The factual aspect of the information is most effective when it is provided in steps, in sufficient detail, repeated as needed, and individualized to meet different needs. This factual aspect includes both explanations of processes (e.g., court procedures, post-shelter living options) and descriptive information for resources (e.g., legal aid, employment opportunities, childcare). Although it is not always possible for one person to provide both emotional and factual information in sufficient quantity, every effort made toward that goal is potentially useful.

Information that hinders these efforts is frequently rooted in (a) media inaccuracies, (b) abuser threats, (c) jurisdictional differences in how legal issues are handled in both civil and criminal proceedings, or (d) generalizations of unusual or specific cases. Media inaccuracies (e.g., t.v. movies showing abuse survivors being badly treated in courtrooms and shelters as dirty, dangerous places) can be countered with visual, factual, and testimonial information. Abuser threats (e.g., breadwinner always gets the children and police do not take abuse seriously) may respond to repeated information and emotional support; unfortunately, some abuser verbal threats (e.g., a threat to retaliate for a 911 call with a beating) do not provide sufficient evidence to generate any immediate relief. Jurisdictional differences do exist in critical areas (e.g., cases are seriously prosecuted even without victim cooperation in some counties and not others) and survivors are understandably reluctant to believe the information which promises more protection or support than they have received elsewhere. Finally, the unique properties of each case do generate examples in which survivors lose their children, homes, health, jobs, and even their lives as a direct result of resisting abuse. The information from those experiences is sometimes generalized among communities of survivors so that it is seen as a major risk, common experience, or even a norm – without due reference to services and resources available to mitigate the concern. Since many of these information barriers are so deeply imbedded that they are not even expressed, special efforts are needed to help survivors verbalize them and then additional information is needed to undermine their impact where appropriate.
Research problem and methods

This research examines the information aspects of intimate partner violence (IPV) from the perspective of the survivors and the two groups of first responders who are most critical to their long-term survival, namely shelter staff and police officers. Although this study is limited in terms of the number of individuals and jurisdictions involved, it does provide some initial answers to the following questions:

- In what areas do IPV survivors need information?
- What qualities make information more useful for IPV survivors?
- What information myths hinder IPV survivors’ efforts?
- What information-related tactics do abusers use to hinder IPV survivors?
- What resources do IPV survivors, shelter staff, and police officers identify as useful or problematic?
- What information concerns do survivors see as either helpful or problematic in their dealings with shelters, the police, and other organizations or entities?

The data for this study is derived from two different sources which are substantially different from each other. By utilizing both sources, the study provides greater depth and breadth than would be possible using a single approach. Nevertheless, neither source is statistically valid as a means of accurately representing all of the IPV survivor information experiences in any population.

The first data source is a series of in-depth, in-person interviews with 24 shelter staff, 14 police officers, and 19 shelter clients in ten cities in three regions of Texas. A total of 63 hours of audio-taped interviews were transcribed resulting in a total of 106,530 words.

The second data source is a set of bulletin board (BB) postings from an active BB community that has been functioning for 35 months and was established solely for the use of IPV survivors. A random sample of this BB’s threads and responses from October 2005 to September 2006 included 410,599 words.

The data were analyzed using the constant comparison method of content analysis to identify examples, patterns, and themes relating to information issues. HyperResearch was used to track the codes that were used in this analysis. A total of 467 unique codes developed from the interview data and were applied a total of 3,259 times. A total of 121 unique codes developed from the BB data and were applied a total of 1,746 times. Further details of the data gathering and analysis processes are available upon request.

The quotations below deliberately fail to include any identifying information, even the pseudonyms assigned to participants, in order to make explicit the degree to which confidentiality is maintained in this study. While most of the statements and postings are reproduced exactly as given, a few minor corrections have been made for brevity or clarity when no meaningful change in tone or content resulted. Obviously far more examples are available than are included here; please contact the author for additional information.
Key Findings

The following points are not likely to surprise anyone experienced in working with IPV survivors but the focus on information may provide a few useful insights.

- **Civil and criminal law information needs regular clarification:** Survivors with children need information on the connections and separations between civil and criminal law. The connections help them strategically in dealing with abusers. (For example, some need to be prepared for abusers deliberately connecting the criminal with the civil when they delay criminal proceedings so that civil proceedings can be concluded first.) The separations help them organize their efforts by clarifying the authorities in each area. For example, the civil courts establish custody of the children but the criminal prosecutor can help them obtain protective orders that include the children.

- **Documentation techniques need holistic support:** Proper, effective documentation can mean the difference between safety and danger, between keeping and losing the children. Learning what information needs to be captured in what format by which person at what time can be as personally powerful as it is legally effective. Most advice on documentation, however, is given out piecemeal and in response to limited situations as different agencies in the support system do their part to help. Presenting active documentation as an inherent part of their planning would be useful.

- **Embrace the complexity:** Finding, managing, and using all of this information from several different sources for months and even years can be overwhelming. Finding what’s needed requires persistence. Survivors literally return to abusers due to the difficulties involved in handling the information. Those who do well appear to embrace the complexity, taking it as inherent in the escape process. Rather than minimizing, hiding, or ignoring the complexity, staff could help survivors build their own personalized information toolkits so that they can actually construct new lives with their own information choices.

- **Guides are essential for the novices:** Those survivors who have experience with law enforcement, courts, lawyers, government agencies, housing authorities, employers, and financial institutions may serve as guides. Novices, however, need guides. The emotional support is just as important as the factual information for some but, in many situations, “guides” could be distilled into web sites, handouts, videos, and other information tools.

- **Helping the abuser holds back escape:** While no one focused on helping the abusers in all of the interviews, many of the individuals on the BB were looking for or had been looking for information on how to help their abusers with medical, mental health, and/or substance abuse care. Unfortunately, such efforts often backfire on two levels. First, the abuser uses a diagnosis as an excuse for the abuse while emotionally manipulating the survivor (e.g., “how could you leave me when I’m mentally ill?”). Second, the survivor may not separate the information on abuse from the information on the abuser’s diagnosis. The fact that this theme was so prevalent among the BB posters, few of whom had made it to a shelter, might indicate that this concern is keeping a significant number of survivors from seeking aid for themselves.
• **Managing information is a learned skill:** Many survivors develop their own techniques for tracking the information they need to get through the separation and escape processes. Some of those techniques are less than safe while others are unduly frustrating. The shelter’s goal sheets, notepads, address books, and so on do encourage information management but some clear instruction on how to develop one’s own information management skill set would be helpful.

• **Needs overlap:** In many situations, progress is only possible if steps are made in an exact sequence or if steps are made on several fronts at the same time. For those who have been isolated, prevented from working, and/or deliberately under-educated, these overlapping needs can be overwhelming. Managing the information component of these efforts (e.g., appointments, transportation, documents, requirements, locations) can be taught and supported. Being prepared for and emotionally supported through the efforts required can be critical to independence.

• **Repetition is productive:** Getting the same information through multiple channels (e.g., friends, police, shelter phone staff, brochures, web sites, books) on a repeated basis does make a difference and is often essential. Like learning a new language, learning to recognize the patterns and nature of abusive relationships takes repetition and time for many survivors. Like learning to walk after a stroke, learning to balance one’s own needs with the array of available support systems requires the practice of repeated, small steps.

• **Staged information release requires customization:** The idea of providing only minimal, essential data at the points of crisis is well accepted. The staged release of more detailed data thereafter, however, is usually managed at a broad policy level. An effort to adjust those policies to the needs and abilities of individual survivors would risk some need to repeat the information but could help people move more swiftly towards safety. A few key gatekeepers who can direct them quickly to appropriate information resources might be the way to balance staged releases with customization.

• **Tactics on dealing with the abuser merit dissemination:** Through years of dealing with abusers, many survivors develop a rich repertoire of tactics for handling everything from hiding money to resisting the honeymoon phase allures. While a few offshoots are embedded in safety/escape planning documents, many of these tactics are not part of the information structures created for survivors. Sharing these tactics helps everyone involved.
Areas in which survivors need information

Information is needed, and provided, in a number of areas such as housing, civil law, criminal procedures, and more. The following are areas in which survivors, shelter staff, and/or police officers recognized a need which has a significant information component. Each area is explained and then examples are provided.

NOTE: Many shelters and victim services programs already provide this information. For survivors to say that they need it when it’s already provided may indicate that their information-seeking skills or information-management skills are still developing. In addition, some cities in this study were too small to be able to provide some of this information or material for their survivors.

Abuse: Many need to understand what abuse is in legal terms as well as in terms of their own sense of self-worth. The nature, patterns, and cycle of abuse (particularly tactics used in the honeymoon phase) as well as the escalating nature of abuse are important to developing a sense of control over the situation. Understanding that can help survivors to recognize and verbalize problems in the face of abusers’ efforts to minimize problems or escape responsibility for the abuse.

- I didn't want to see what my life was. I can't open my eyes. I basically needed information she had. (Survivor, interview)
- A domestic violence victim 9 times out of 10 doesn't quite see [themselves as the victim of a criminal act]. They see it as because of their actions or inactions this is why this particular thing happened to them, so they need to be educated about what's going on. (Police Officer)
- Probably the first thing that they are confused about is how a person who loves them can hurt them continually. So a lot of ideas about gender roles and lack of understanding about their own rights, that no one deserves to be treated the way they're treated. (Shelter Staff)
- [abusers] try very hard to convince themselves that what they are doing is OK and to shift the blame onto you. (Survivor, posting)
- He will scream and get right in my face, sometimes he will grab me by the arm .... He gets even angrier if I start crying ... says that my crying "makes him want to beat me even more" .... He says that I should not be afraid because he would never hit me even though I "deserve the beatings" ... I really feel like I am going crazy. He makes me feel like I am backed into a corner and no matter what I say or do it is never right. After looking at some of these websites I've realized that maybe this could be a form of abuse but when I talk to him about it he feels that it is not and that since he does not leave any physical bruises on my body that it is not abuse. (Survivor, posting)
- In my head, I know what the profile of an abusive relationship is, but I can't seem to see it in my life. ... he also yells at me, pinches, hits me, and pulls my hair, and puts me down for not earning enough... I feel helpless and out of control, but I feel that my husband and I are both smart, well educated people who should be able to figure this out. (Survivor, posting)
**Abuser, help for:** Many of the BB posters were deeply concerned about how to get medical, mental health, or substance abuse care for their abusers in the expectation of “curing” them of their abusive behavior. This issue did not arise among any of the interviewed populations so perhaps the problem is one which prevents people from seeking assistance.

- *He said he’d go to anger management and counseling. Where can I seek help for that?* (Survivor, posting)
- *I feel so trapped and where no one is sure whether he is ill or evil* (Survivor, posting)
- *My ex is bi-polar and abusive. I don’t feel that one has to do with the other.... I have done research on his illness and although these people are impossible to deal with, they don’t all do the domestic violence thing* (Survivor, posting)
- *I have finally surrendered to the fact that IT WILL NOT CHANGE. Seeing the diagnostic information [in the physicians diagnostic manual] on my husbands personality disorder made me realize that.* (Survivor, posting)
- *I feel that if he is not being treated for bi-polar - which he is not - he is sick and cannot help the things he does. It makes me feel a little better that perhaps it is chemical and he is not just a mean guy.* (Survivor, posting)

**Abuser, tactics for handling:** The ability of survivors to mitigate, avoid, escape from, and otherwise handle their abusers is well established. Information on these tactics, however, is not often provided in formal information structures. In many of these examples, however, informal information sharing provides excellent tactical advice. None of these tactics came from interviews; all are from survivor postings on the BB. (See also the examples on “Legalities—documenting abuse” for more tactics.)

- In response to a poster who couldn’t leave without getting the abuser’s signature in advance: *If you ever did decide you wanted to leave for good, would there be any possibility that you could kind of make something up to get your husband to sign for the children’s passports? Like, saying your Grandma/Mom or some relative was sick/dying and you need to bring the children for a visit to see her one last time. Do you think that might work if you caught him in the right mood?*
- In response to a poster whose abuser controlled her by threatening to kill her pets: *Animal welfare will assist women in DV situations by finding foster homes for their pets at a minimal cost, while you’re in the refuge and until such time that you can move your pets into a safe environment.*
- In response to a poster looking for ways to remain calm despite abuser’s behavior: *I've been practicing the breathing exercises and think they're great for those times I'm really p-ed off thinking about what I've gone through, or the times when I'm really down and depressed with no feelings of self-worth.*
- In response to a poster looking for ways to insure that her abuse does not begin to stalk her after she moves:
  - *You may want to change your daily routine if you have one so he won't know when to look for you.*
  - *Purchase a dog. Even a small dog will let you know if someone is lurking around.*
I would also suggest using a po box for family to send you mail and a disposable cell phone (can't trace) to keep in touch with them. It will make it harder to find you and it also might be safer for them if he knows they don't know where you are.

change your bank account details

- In response to various discussions on distraction and stress-relief techniques to use when the initial break has been made but the abuser is either in the honeymoon phase or has moved on to constant efforts to contact; these are designed to help survivors resist returning to or focusing on the abuser.

  - I find when I exercise it really improves my self-esteem/self-confidence. This summer I was exercising regularly and got in great shape
  - Also, ran 14 miles [in my marathon training] this morning, which I think gets out anger and stress and allows me to sleep at night.
  - The best way to fight men like these is by staying as strong and determined as you possibly can. And by staying as healthy as you possibly can. Do you exercise? If you don't let me recommend it to you. It will give you spirits a lift and be good for you also. It takes your mind off things as well.
  - Everything that we are living through right now, Pat Benatar sang about in the early 80s Please listen to at least one of her albums(Crimes of passion) is the best album
  - I forced myself to do the things I wanted to do. And that was difficult too. ... But I did get off my butt and forced myself to socialize....
  - When I ... continuously had that urge to call or stop by his place I would call a friend and talk for a long time. Do something that would wear me out like jogging. Get some friends together for some fun. Start a conversation, in public, with a stranger. Join a support group or a club. By all means stay busy. Before you know it you will be in control of yourself to a point where his antics will not have control over you.

- joined a running club and a biking club

- I have kept myself busy doing housework

- In response to various discussions on how to avoid or minimize contact with the abuser

  - You may want to think about changing your numbers - or not answering the phone when he calls (which is hard I know).
  - you CAN ask the court that ANY contact between the two of you, even on visitation issues, be done through email. ... if you are corresponding through email only, this will surely cut down on arguments, threats etc. ... Do not be afraid to ask for that, it is a perfectly legitimate request.
  - Going to a social function so you are not there when the phone rings.
  - Change your number, my girl, or if you can't do that, every time he calls, just hang up. And delete that text message - I just know you've saved it and you need to quit re-reading it
  - Ask a friend to help. I have a friend helping me stay away from a chat room where I was triggered too much. when I want to peak I email her that "I am not peaking" sometimes I send her that message 5 times a day. It helps to ask for help and have someone to sort of answer to.
- Get a post office box for a forwarding address so you can be untraceable.
- Take a support system to court with you - make it people who don't like him so that you won't have any reason or opportunity to speak with him alone.
- Change your email and you IM address's. get a yahoo address and use a bogus name so he can't do a search and find it.
- I programmed the phone so that "don't answer" pops up on the phone when he calls.
- I just found out that my ex-boyfriend somehow got ahold of my email address that I reserved for friends and family ... do you think that I should block him from my account (I haven't responded to him) or have the emails routed to the spam folder for future evidence if needed.

**Basics such as clothing, furniture, and housewares:** Shelters and even victim services programs offer basic items or track agencies that offer them. Knowing that such services are available may help some leave and support their developing independence. These basics help to establish a home, affirming the decision to leave.

- he had physically forced me to get out of the house. I mean, hitting and pushing me out the door with nothing but the clothes on my back. (Survivor, posting)
- Right now I'm getting ready to move into an apartment. I'm kind of looking for information on how to get furniture and housewares and things like that right now. (Survivor, interview)
- When I left my abuser, he took everything I owned before I could get it all moved out of the house. What he didn't take, he ruined somehow. I was hurt and angry and felt as if I would never make it. But i did. Friends helped me. I was given a few pieces of furniture a little bit at a time. For a long time I didn't even have a table to eat off of. But I had peace and harmony in my home. I felt safe and happy. it was mine. (Survivor, posting)

**Benefits:** Although government benefits are often essential to economic escape from an abuser, the complexities of applying for and documenting the right to benefits can be daunting, especially for those who’ve had to relocate.

- One of the ladies here who's new, she's never been on Medicare or any assistance, [but] we're able to help her out and let her know the ropes on how to get certain things. (Survivor, interview)
- Like for instance I heard you can get compensation for being abused, but I heard that through the word of one of us. They need to let us know about that up front. You have the rights for this and this is what's entitled to you. (Survivor, interview)
- Victims are not aware that crime victims' compensation is available And they're generally very grateful. I've heard a lot of gratitude. (Shelter Staff)
- Who will pay the mortgage and bills - I am disabled and can't work [he attacked me with a baseball bat and left me permanently disabled]. (Survivor, posting)
Children: The needs regarding children vary from the physical (e.g., government aid, daycare) to the internal (e.g., learning parenting techniques for traumatized children). Information resources are not always available on the entire spectrum of needs but many survivors are willing to make extensive efforts to get this information.

• What's been hardest for her is getting control of her children. They're always looking for somebody to blame for everything that's happened and she's the closest one to them, so they blame her. So that's the hardest thing for her. Gaining control of her kids. She actually would like information on that. (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

• They come in with the kids out of control. First of all they’re not allowed to discipline their kids. They come in here and are like, “What am I supposed to do?” (Shelter Staff)

• They're getting bad information from the abuser and his family. Like one of our clients had gotten the information that her child was going to suffer because she wasn’t with her father. (Shelter Staff)

• Information on how to talk to teachers about their own children, that's one of our goals this year. (Shelter Staff)

• It's one of those roadblocks that frustrates them. She got her kids enrolled in school, then they told her they had to have shots. Then you need to do this. She got that and it was something else. Ok and then you got a job, you gotta have daycare, but you can’t get daycare without the shots. (Shelter Staff)

• My daughter totally flipped out twice here. They had no idea what to do with her here besides call the cops. ... If I had had the number I needed when it happened I could have called the emergency and not gone through all this. (Survivor, interview)

• We were given lots of information and hand-outs about the effects of DV on children over various years and how they act out these things. It's too long for me to go into here, except to say that if you have any queries then please go and see the DV Service in your area. (Survivor, posting)

• Hi, does anyone have any advice on how to deal with your children and divorce? .... I want to make the adjustment as painless as possible, but I guess there is no way around it, there will be pain. Just wanted to know what others have tried and what seems to work best. I have been trying to read some books about helping kids to cope, but I think I don’t have alot of coping skills myself. (Survivor, posting)

Education: Although less commonly mentioned, the long-term effort to gain sufficient education to obtain a living-wage job requires information on the options, even if they’re not immediately explored.

• I don't care if I'm [disabled]. Give me another degree. I want to do something. When you sit around the house, all you do is worry. (Survivor, interview)

• I want to go back to school, but I don't see them saying this is what you need to do. They haven't even brought it up. They want you to get a job. (Survivor, interview)

• We have some come in that are at 7th or 8th grade level and they want to become teachers. First of all, let’s look at this as far as them being qualified. We're talking about 6-7 years. First of all, we have to take you through the GED. Then you're not going to be able to go full time to school. Or maybe you might be able to go full time
and get through in 4 or 5 years. But we need to look at steps which are attainable and not set you up for failure. (Shelter Staff)

- We encourage [getting nursing certification] because if you can keep your employment there then maybe the hospital or the nursing home will pay for you to go to college. And maybe they'll give you a job on the weekend or the evenings. ... And the only thing you have to do is, once you're finished, is work for them for one year, and still get paid. (Shelter Staff)

**Housing:** Housing information is a moving target in most communities but it is essential for final separation from an abuser. The fact that it requires an income, documentation, and deposits adds to the complexities of finding information on acceptable options for someone with an IPV history. Those complexities take so much time to navigate and prepare for that some people want extensive information right away and others need emotional support to deal with the pain of explaining their situation to strangers.

- Now I have my restraining order I went to the department of housing and about 50 other organizations to see if someone could help me move rather quickly so I can be unreachable at home to my ex. Well my goodness I never realized how horrible people could be. One woman interrupted me telling her that my ex was extremely violent etc and I was really scared, interrupted me to say "yes yes I've heard it all before, what makes you special?" I mean I'm sure she has heard it all before, but that doesn't mean that I've had to sit in front of strangers and talk about it before, and then be judged on how BAD it is. (Survivor, posting)

- With the housing, they don't give you information for it until you've been here a little over a month, maybe 6 weeks. And if you have the resources or finances they should automatically be telling you, "There's this and this." Cause there's a lot of housing programs that I'm just finding out about that they haven't even mentioned to me. (Survivor, interview)

- The first thing we would need is access to housing options that don't have a year to three year waitlist. They don't have any information on surrounding areas. (Survivor, interview)

- 10 years ago there was a staff member that would tell us where to go for housing. She explained how to get help with your electric.... But unfortunately with the staff cutbacks they did away with her. (Survivor, interview)

- I think that because of a lot of things that happen because of domestic violence that closes a lot of doors for them. So if they've been evicted ... or if they weren't able to pay their rent because their abuser took their money or whatever the situation might have been, that all ruins their credit and their credibility. So it's very difficult at that point for ... in terms of just looking for an apartment. (Shelter Staff)

**Immigrants, legal information on abuse outside and within the U.S.** The abuse crosses national boundaries so survivors may be dealing with multiple sets of legal and social service information.

- It's also helpful to have people know it's national, that you're going to get help nationally. Even though you're here, that if your situation happened in another place,
w'll help you make a report. The violence happened in Mexico and when she got here we helped her file a report in Mexico. It's important for people to know that if it didn't happen here, we can still do something about it. (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

- And when the ladies are illegal themselves, there's nowhere to move them. When they're U.S. citizens or residents, we can move them up north to different shelters where they can't be found. ... We tell them, “Is it a possibility for you to go back to Mexico, to where you're from?” “Well no, he knows where to find me if I go back.” “Well, do you have relatives in other states in Mexico?” “Well, no.” What do we do then? (Shelter Staff)

- Here where I am living, in order to get a passport for your children, BOTH parents must go to the consulate. I am a US citizen but cannot get passports to get away. I can't move away inside of the country where I live because you need BOTH parents signature for just about everything. (Survivor, posting)

- I think that we are getting that information out and it is being explained to the public. That it's not your fault. Don't make yourself feel like it's your fault even though you do. But there are still some individuals out there..., and this is usually more in the community of different cultures, that are still raised knowing that this may happen back in their country still and it's just part of their culture. (Police Officer)

- A lot of the foreign women..., if they had perhaps some type of service to explain to them what their rights are or how the law is different in this country. To where they knew exactly the truth about the law, as opposed to what they're being told. And I can't think of what type of instrument could be used for that. I wish I could say how that could be done. .... Because it's a huge problem. Because the women don't know and how do you tell a woman if you don't know that she's being abused? It's like getting the information to her when you don't know who she is. (Police Officer)

- Immigrants, legal information on immigration or residency. The abuse fear may be overwhelmed by the deportation fear. Having information that specifically addresses that deportation fear directly and in some detail can be useful.
  - [They're afraid of deportation] especially if the husband is from here and she's an illegal alien. And we tell them, “That's not what we're here for and, in fact, there are programs that are set up to protect you because you're an illegal alien. We're not going to throw you back; you're a witness.” Make sure they know there's programs out there; they don't have to take the abuse. (Police Officer)
  - They don't have a good idea about their legal situation. They don't have legal papers to stay here so they don't want to report their abuse. They think they will lose their kids and immigration will send them back and they will lose everything. They don't think they will qualify for any legal protection, but that is not correct. (Shelter Staff)
  - The majority are ladies that comes from Mexico or across the border and that they're afraid of deportation and the husbands use this. So yes they're afraid of this. (Survivor, interview)
Immigrants, resources. The basic concept of abuse as illegal may be just as unfamiliar as the array of services available. Factual, clear, detailed information in the appropriate language can be effective. [These survivor quotes are all from self-identified immigrants, some of which were shared via a shelter staff translator.]

- She's on the waiting list at the resource center here for the older one for therapy in Spanish. (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)
- If they don't have family and a lot of times if they're not from this country, they don't know [about the shelter]. (Police Officer)
- When you get into the shelter for the first time, you don't know nothing about anything, so she was surprised by everything that she received there, because she didn't know that that type of services exist. So everything that she received at the shelter, counseling, protection, everything, she didn't know. Everything was very surprising. (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

Jobs: The lynchpin of independence, jobs break down into three different types and information is needed on each of the three. First, opportunities to apply for traditional, full-time, permanent jobs are needed to provide long term security. Second, temporary, day-labor opportunities are needed to build a basic financial reserve and to encourage initial efforts at independence while hunting for full-time work. Finally, in-home employment is needed for those who have too many children to afford daycare or those who immigration concerns.

- Job leads are pretty much just taken out of the green sheet or the paper and they put it all on one piece of paper. (Survivor, interview)
- try to find a way that they can have something like, something like a work force or labor ready. Some kind of deal where they have something set up with somebody on the outside. (Survivor, interview)
- I think maybe if they have a list that they can have on the board, of different jobs that we can call and say, hey do you need any help, can we apply for the job. Not something they carry around with them, a lot of ladies will just chuck it in the trash. (Survivor, interview)
- they decided to have those classes...because this is a way that they can make a little money and also to support their own families (Shelter Staff)
- It's very, very important to have all the information. The first step to take is to get the information since you're in your home and you're planning what you're going to do if you have the information. The information that's more important is that the person won't be deported, the [help is available to get] work, and the psychological orientation. (Survivor, interview)
- I am praying for a new job because that is a way I see that I can get out of this. No new interviews yet, but I've applied for a bunch of things. (Survivor, posting)
- I guess the plan is to get a job first so you can support yourself - it's just a bit of a catch 22, because it is so hard to hold down a job when you are in an abusive marriage, your self-esteem is so compromised... Do you have family or anyone that you could stay with for a couple of months to get your feet back under you? (Survivor, posting)
Legalities — child custody, support, visitation: The information on these issues needs to be kept in step with the criminal proceedings. Savvy abusers will delay criminal proceedings to avoid having criminal records as they move ahead on the civil front. In many cases, survivors feel overwhelmed, fearful, or blind-sided by the use of children’s issues as a weapon. They don’t know who to ask for what kind of information since these civil matters are, from their perspective, integral to the criminal matters.

- A lot of times officers will get called to the scene, asked questions of child custody, which is also civil. We’ll let them know, “You need to contact an attorney or some other organization that can help you with that but we can’t really advise you on issues of child custody or anything like that.” (Police Officer)
- We had a call last week, “My husband has the child and we’re going through a divorce.” Well, all I can tell you is too bad. What you should have done is gone to the attorney general and set up your child support even if you were just separated.... But you didn’t. Ok, what I can tell you now is act like you want to get back together with him and try to get back together with him if you want your child back. And as soon as you’re able to, run with your child. We have a shelter. We can keep you there for 2 days, set you up with the attorney general. ... She says, “It's kind of hard. I don't want to go back to him.” Then he'll keep the child until the divorce. ... And we tell them you watch your child like a hawk because he's going to try to steal that child to get control of you. (Shelter Staff)
- So when the victim looks at me and says, “Am I in jeopardy of losing my child?” and the truth of the matter is that money talks in our criminal justice system. So if we have victims who don't have enough to get an attorney and the husband has all the money because she's a stay-at-home mom, the likelihood is that her losing her kids is high. (Victims Services Officer)
- And I'm finding out things I didn't know. There were other options that I was not clear of. ... The state when you're pregnant they will make your husband ... cover your rent, utilities, everything. (Survivor, interview)
- You just assume because you've got a protective order that you're kids are protected. But you still, if you're going through a divorce, you have to fight for protected, restricted visitation. (Shelter Staff)
- I am NOT about to threaten them (like I've been told to do) and tell them if they don't talk to him that I will be in contempt of court and go to jail, and they will have to go live with their dad. To me, that is abusing the children, and I won't be a part of it. (Survivor, posting)
- Went to the shelter a few days ago and got court papers for my boys [by an ex-husband] today to remove them from my home for they are in harms way. My ex filed for full custody. ... They are treating me like i'm the one that is the abuser. I can't help feeling frustrated. [My current husband] told me if i came home he would give me the money for a lawyer so now here i am. Lawyer said 50/50 chance judge will send them to their dad's for good. [My current husband] sure is having a good laugh. Said, “Teaches you to go to the shelter.” (Survivor, posting)

Legalities — court and police procedures: Basic information on court proceedings, both civil and criminal, can be critical to a survivor’s ability to complete the process. Fear of
the unknown, of facing the abuser, of making mistakes, and so on can often be mitigated by detailed, concrete, simple information. Understanding what the police can and can not do for them helps to prevent loss of trust in the police.

- The legal process is definitely something that is problematic. I think that a lot of it is just that unknown and just the fact that if you don't have an advocate with you or someone that can really guide you through that they end up just going to court and being confused. Because the court system isn't set up to help inform you every step of the way, it's just following its proceedings. (Shelter Staff)
- [We have a system] with the advocate going and observing a proceeding about protective orders, so at least you have some more detailed information. To be able to say more than just “this application is filled out this way.” To actually say, “When you go to court you're gonna see the judge sitting up there. You're gonna see all that type of stuff.” Hopefully making them feel more comfortable with knowing what to expect, because I think a lot of it is just that feeling of just walking into something blindly that really makes people nervous. (Shelter Staff)
- Court is very intimidating. They have to face their abuser. ... They're afraid of anything they don't understand and they don't understand the legal system at all. They watch TV. (Shelter Staff)
- I have to tell them, “It's civil, there's nothing I can do until you make the first step. I can't keep him from coming picking up the kids tomorrow.” ... There's nothing the police can do. Then we become the enemy because we can't side with any one particular person. So they lose a little trust in us. (Police Officer)
- A lot of times officers will get called to the scene and they'll ask questions on issues on property, who can keep what property. And we have to explain to them most of the time you have to contact an attorney to solve those kinds of issues. (Police Officer)
- I don't know all the legal stuff either, but i've done a tremendous about of research, so I understand a lot of it. It is confusing to me, when the law is not followed. (Survivor, posting)
- I still need some help in deciding what to do with my daughter. Should i give him the chance to get better and still have visitation or any other rights with her? Im a little confused as to how it works when fathers are in jail. (Survivor, posting)

Legalities – CPS: CPS is used as a threat by abusers and, occasionally, by police. It’s possible for CPS to be called even if no charges were filed against the abuser. In addition, there are certainly occasions when children are in danger and CPS must be involved. But understanding the parameters of CPS jurisdiction can take some of the fear out of interacting with them.

- I've only had to do it twice in the last 5 years, that I've had to say, “You're choosing to stay in this environment. I'm going to have to contact my friend in child protective services.” Usually that's enough for them to say, “Ok, I'll stay with my sister.” I know it kind of sounds like you're strong-arming them, but you know, you're the adult and I'm here to help you. But if you refuse that help, I can't force it. But I can't, with good conscious, turn around and leave when you've got a bunch of toddlers running around. But if that's what I have to do to motivate them to get out of this environment. So we all work good together. (Police Officer)
• We're going to call CPS if there's a child that's been in the mix of domestic violence. It's our job, our duty, regardless to call CPS. And that's what we let them know right up front. If your child was there when your spouse picked up the knife and your child saw that, we're obligated to call CPS. And that's our policy. That's not really a state law. That's our policy and we choose it. And police officers here at our agency, we're gonna do that anyway, just for the safety. The safety of the child and to cover ourselves as well. (Police Officer)
• We will contact CPS, even if we don't file charges, if we feel that the child is in a situation where he's beating her and the child could have gotten hurt. CPS is contacted and they do their investigation. (Police Officer)
• They took a lot away from me 'cause I keep on staying with the abuser. ... I didn't understand it, but ... they are helping me try to get my baby back. (Survivor, interview)
• There are some concerns that their children will be taken away. That once they open the door of exposing their life that somehow CPS and entities that can get involved with children will potentially remove their kids or see them as unfit moms in particular. And that's not necessarily not true. (Shelter Staff)

Legalities – criminal procedures: For both immediate and planning purposes, survivors need information on the basics of the following criminal procedures: filing and dropping charges; getting, using, and canceling protective orders; getting emergency protective orders; and filing reports. Unfortunately, much of that information must be given at a time of crisis and it can be given in purely legal language. Additionally, they need help in seeing their role in the process; they need to continue to provide information, gather information, and contribute to the whole process.
• He's been calling me since and been very remorseful, but I checked his case online and it said he plead "not guilty". I asked him about it, and he said that they put that plea in for everyone at the arraignment because 72 hours is not enough time for them to review everyone's case, and that gives them time to be appointed legal counsel and then time for them to change their plea. I believed this as it sounded legit. (Survivor, posting)
• Does anyone know the laws? I just looked again online, and he plead not guilty. Does that mean I have to go to court too? ... I have no doubt he will be ... asking me to take it back and pretend I'm the crazy one... Does anyone know the laws? California laws? (Survivor, posting)
• This morning I was served a subpoena saying that I have to be in court on Friday because of his not guilty plea. ... The D.A. was nice and gave me the # to a victim advocate, and I've called but can't get a hold of anyone but voice mail right now. That's why I'm posting now. (Survivor, posting)
• [Shelter staff] talked to me about [protective orders], but I never had the courage to get up there and do anything like that 'cause I didn't know if it's gonna take time or money. I never even went and asked anything about it. (Survivor, interview)
• They can come in and fill out a non-prosecution. They can know about it, but we just don't tell them. We don't offer that information, but if they would like to come in and
fill out a non-prosecution we will let them do that. But that doesn't mean that the charges will be dropped. (Police Officer)

• The most common question that would be how can I drop the charges. Tell them they can't, you didn't file the charges, we did. And we're not dropping them. (Police Officer)

• It's very confusing. I assumed that when I called the police a magic wand was going to be waved. Well, it doesn't get waved. They would if they could, but they can't. You have to go and file for a protective order. Then you also have to, I think, file charges, in addition to the report, then you have file the work on that. That's a whole separate baby all by itself. (Survivor, interview)

• Sometimes unfortunately a lot of the victims think that when the officer gives them a card with a case number they think that they've filed charges. They think that that's it and tomorrow somebody's gonna go out and arrest this guy and they're never gonna see him again. And that's not what happens. That's the reason why ... when they're sitting there with a black eye, they're gonna definitely either get a phone call or a letter reinforcing what the officer's already told them. If you want to file charges this is what you have to do. (Police Officer)

• A lot of these females have been abused for a number of years. And once they get this information [about how to get a protective order], it's "That's the last straw. I'm going forward with this, I know this can be done." And they seek the help. And he's arrested. (Police Officer)

• They don't really talk about protective orders, you have to find that out through CPS. I did that for the safety of my daughter. (Survivor, interview)

• [3 survivors talking in an interview about getting a protective order]
  o That's not happening 'cause that gives your address out and I ain't doing it.
  o Yeah, that's why I haven't done it either.
  o If the [shelter staff] say "you need to do a protective order" then you can kick me out, cause that's one more way of him finding me. ... I don't want to make him mad; I just want to fade away quietly.
  • I'm scared to [get a protective order]. It involves the CPS, don't it? ... I'm scared of that. He'll find out where I'm at. ... I'm scared to ask /cause some people tell me if you do this or that, he'll probably know where you're at. He'll go looking for you. (Survivor, interview)

Legalities – divorce and property: Effective, affordable legal aid for divorce and/or property settlement is difficult to obtain so any information on how best to document, prepare for, and anticipate that process can be valuable, as can emotional support.

• It is possible he's going to trash your stuff. But we also make them aware ... that criminal mischief is the statute [and there] is a clause in there that specifically states that it does not matter whether you or the other person has an interest in the property or not, it is still an offence. .... So I have gotten family violence criminal mischief warrants because she left the house and when we went to do the [standby then we put] him in jail for destroying her property. (Police Officer)
• He took my car, he took everything. I didn't bring nothing. The only thing I had was my wallet and maybe 1 or 2 pampers for my baby. I have 4 kids with me. (Survivor, interview)

• The legal part has been really frustrating. I've been through 3 different legal services. And it just falls through. ... The waiting period for some of these is really bad. I have 30 days for divorce and by time legal aid got back there was nothing they could do because they took that whole month to say they could help. Child support could have been fixed. He was told he didn't have to pay it. So it's been a really hard situation. (Survivor, interview)

• She'll give them information about legal services. There are several centers in the area that offer free legal services to the women .... A lot of them want to get a divorce and get out but they can't afford it. So they'll give them that type of information for the legal services. (police, referring to Victim Services Officer)

• When we have ladies who say, “Yes... he already told me he would never give me a divorce” then they have problems about going to court. Then they're saying, “Well, I don't want to go alone.” And we say, “Ok, you're not going to be alone. We're going to have somebody go with you to court. If you need to come back to the shelter, you're very welcome to come back to the shelter at any time.” (Shelter Staff)

• She has 6 kids. Her biggest fear is that if she gets her divorce tried [here], she's going to lose her kids because he has a lot of pull locally. So she's calling around to other states. This is a macho town, the men win. (Shelter Staff)

• I have been married for 3 years, and my husband is very abusive. I can't leave due to the fact i bought my home over 20 years ago and this is were we are living now. He won't leave, and wants me to go. I am now so frightened of him, that some nights i just can't sleep. I no longer feel safe in my own home. Does anyone have a suggestion on how to leave an abusive relationship, without losing your home? (Survivor, posting)

• I'm a little afraid that if I leave for a day or so the locks will be changed when I come back. (Survivor, posting)

Legalities – documenting abuse: Proper, effective documentation can mean the difference between safety and danger, between keeping and losing the children. Learning what information needs to be captured in what format by which person at what time can be really useful. Most advice on documentation, however, is given out piecemeal and in response to limited situations as different agencies in the support system do their part to help. The BB postings included a great deal of advice on the value of and techniques for documentation but few of the interviewed survivors mentioned it.

• Does anyone have any tips on keeping a log of incidents? What details should be recorded, how to remember the details etc? (Survivor, posting)

• I kept a diary of my X's abuse, just in case it was needed for court etc. I did this because I found that I too, forgot a lot of things. Now after I've left, I look at it every now and again to remind myself why I felt so bad and why I had to leave. I would say the most important thing is to write the date, then whatever occurred, especially any forms of abuse you incurred during that time...things that were said/done, how it made you feel... This is all important for records, but also as a way for you to get it
out of your system. Please protect these writings well though. I did mine using the Word programme on the computer, and that way I could go into the security and use a password so that no-one could access it. (Survivor, posting)

- Every time he abuses me I get it recorded either by the law or by telling people I know. I have a list of abusive behaviour towards me that is longer than my arm. (Survivor, posting)

- Always save and print off anything that is out of line in the emails. You can of course tape his conversations. (Survivor, posting)

- If you want proof that he is abusive then you have to start documenting everything that happens from now on with the police. (Survivor, posting)

- Remember when you go to report an incident sometimes the bruises don't show up for a day, especially ones from being choked or restrained by the arms...go back the next day and have the cops take pictures. If you aren't ready to charge him have a friend you trust take pictures with dates of incidents. It is really important to have some records of the abuse because the police are often reluctant to press charges because it is a "he said - she said" situation. Even if they say it is too late to press charges this time, it might help to get a restraining order or prove a history in the future when it happens again. (Survivor, posting)

- If he's making inappropriate comments to [the children] in his letters then keep them (with the postage stamped envelope as proof of when they were sent). You may be able to use them in future in any legal matters concerning visitation rights etc with the children. (Survivor, posting)

- Well, she got hit 10 times in the past, but she didn't call the police and the lady is saying, “This is has been an ongoing problem, I finally have decided to call the police.” And there's no documentation, there's no police reports, no prior police reports, no prior arrest reports, no prior calls to 911. She's taking it and taking it and finally she calls the police. Well, the judge goes, “You don't have enough for a protective order.” And you and I both know that they do, but most judges start out as defense attorneys and they have a different mindset. (Police Officer)

- Basically it comes down to your word against mine if there's no bruises cuts or. Not even the district attorney will step in if there's no bruises. They want physical evidence. A while back ... I feared for my client's safety, that she was going to die. And he said there's nothing he can do. (Shelter Staff)

**Legalities – documents:** Keeping track of and getting proper copies of legal identification, children’s birth certificates, school records, and so on can be essential to obtaining basic social services. While gathering these documents is often included in safety planning advice, managing them afterwards can be frustrating.

- If they could help me connect all the dots so I could get all my legal stuff and my ID situation. I can't even start looking for work or housing 'til I get my ID sorted. (Survivor, interview)

- I didn't get my pills that day cause my card had expired, so I didn't get it 'til my baby's check came in, showed them a copy. That was a week later. (Survivor, interview)
• When you go into the office and you want to apply for emergency assistance, it's best to have every information on hand that they're gonna basically ask for. ... For instance proof of residency; they give you a letter of residency here. Proof of any kind of income coming in, whether it's disability, child support, income from your job. ... I told [another survivor] to make sure she had the children's social security cards on her and their birth certificates and some kind of ID - her ID, her social security, and her birth certificate and the kids’ as well. (Survivor, interview)

• Please consider leaving now. Take your important documents (birth certificates, ID, keys, meds, SS cards, other paperwork) with you (Survivor, posting)

Legalities—own criminal record: Sometimes survivors have criminal records as a result of or directly related to their abuse history. Once that criminal record is on file, then everything else becomes difficult, from housing to employment. Information on the possibility of getting such a record might encourage a survivor’s tendency to leave. Information on clearing such a record might encourage others to move ahead.

• He was being watched for things that he was doing and the cops came in on us and since I was there I got in trouble for it also. Not as much trouble, but now I have a criminal history. And I would not have anything on my record if it was not for him. Now it's hard for me to do anything, get a job, get help with housing, get help with anything. (Survivor, interview)

• I've had situations where I've arrested both people there because they started fighting while I'm there. It will start off push push shove shove. And it's kinda like, “y'all can't do this.” I went to hook the guy up first ‘cause he was a whole lot bigger than she was. And she's standing there going, “yeah, you take him to jail.” I said, “once I get him locked up you're next.” (Police Officer)

• I went to jail for assault, which I shouldn't have went but I did anyway. (Survivor, interview)

• We do trainings with law enforcement to explain, “This is what it may look like and ... there's not going to be bruises immediately.” They may not see furniture turned over. And sometimes what they will see is scratches on the man and so sometimes they end up arresting both people. And I can empathize. It's very difficult for police officers because they can only act on what they see and what they're told. So most batterers are incredible actors, good liars and can convince anybody. (Shelter Staff)

• [People think that] if you call the police they will come out and protect you. Let's say I'm fighting and I bite my partner 'cause I'm being choked and I get away and I call the police and police come out. Hello, they're going to arrest me. And that happens quite a bit and there's not marks on her. (Shelter Staff)

• We starting arguing I smacked him. Well, I was arrested. I have to go to court. He spent the past year beating me and emotionally tormenting me and I am defending myself against him! His 2nd wife is taking him to court this week and I am going as the 2nd victim and she has offered to help me against him. (Survivor, posting)

• I had a protective order against my ex ... He lured me into the house ... as I dropped my daughter off and proceeded to choke me .... Then he grabbed her and ran to MY car and locked her in it telling me that I would never see her again - all the while she was clawing at him to get away from him ... I ran to a neighbors and called the
police. Apparently they didn't have my PO on file and since he had scratches on his face (never mind they were from my daughter) we were both arrested. Later mine was dismissed b/c they realized he was an abuser and looked at his record but none the less - I have an assault charge on my record. (Survivor, posting)

Legalities—protection from abuser: Understanding the techniques for and limitations of gaining legal protection from the abuser can be difficult when clear answers are not consistently available. Nevertheless, marshalling information on the array of services and options can help some survivors make the choice to move towards a safer life.

• What she found most helpful was the legal advocacy because she felt like once there had been legal work done that it actually worked in keeping him away. (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

• She is going to say that she was assaulted and there's no visible injuries and officers sometimes, I hate to say to this, have to see some signs, because they have to write in their offense report that they saw something. That there was some bruising, but y'all just got there and the bruises, they haven't formed. Or she was threatened and there was no actual assault. You can be threatened, “I'm gonna kill you” or “I'm gonna hurt you just like I did the last time.” And she's gonna be intimidated. It's just that she doesn't have any marks or bruises. (Police Officer)

• [One of our counselors] is providing training to our cadets now ... and I think that has a big impact because a lot of them don't realize when they go out there, she might have been the one to call the police, but when they get out there she might be saying, “Oh don't take him away, don't send him to jail.” And they don't realize she really is looking into the future. She's saving herself, because even if he gets taken away he's gonna get out. When he gets out she can say, “You heard me say I didn't want them to take you away. I told them to leave you alone.” There are some people who might even get a little violent with the police officer to keep him away, but it's really taking care of yourself. (Shelter Staff)

• I've heard people say, “I can't file charges against him. He'll come back and he'll hurt me.” I say, “That's why we need to put a 24 hour hold on him. You need to get a protective order. Then you might want to consider moving someplace else where he doesn't know where you are. Unfortunately no, we can't protect everybody 24 hours a day. We have to respond to what's happening and you need to get yourself out of this situation.” (Police Officer)

• Women that can't work because of their children's schedules or are trying to keep a low profile so their spouse or abuser can't find them, it's a lot harder on them. (Survivor, interview)

• They would rather go back to him and be able to see him face to face and know when the next beating is coming ... than to be away and live in constant threat or fear that he's gonna find them. That's pretty classic. And so that's why the initial part of it is helping her to know she doesn't need to live this way and there are other ways. We can help protect her and so forth. (Shelter Staff)

• There are some that still, because of the fear and the terror aspect, still are afraid to call. Because he's told them, “if you ever call the police on me, I'll kill you.” So it's hard to get past that. (Shelter Staff)
• I had to get a restraining order but that hasn’t stopped him. He comes by and writes die on everything my family owns. He threatened to kill me with a gun. (Survivor, posting)
• Just when I thought that the fighting was over, I simply asked for a copy of the no-contact order so that I could keep it with me. I was then told by the prosecutor, "well, that was more of a verbal agreement, so it's not in writing". So, now I am fighting to have them make an amendment to the case and serve an official written no-contact order…. A VERBAL AGREEMENT????!!!??! He's kidding, right? (Survivor, posting)

Medical care: Physical health, mental health, and substance abuse care are commonly needed to deal with the aftermath of repeated abuse. Having information about the qualifications and specialties of those care-givers as well as some control over which ones to work with can be productive.
• They could have more information on hand. I know one of the ladies here, she kind of referred somebody, but she wasn't sure what kind of insurance she was accepting. They don't know all the information a person would probably need to know. I would want to know what kind of doctor I'm going to be dealing with. I would like to know different things about a doctor so that I could ... see the best person .... (Survivor, interview)
• I'm staying here so it's harder to find a doctor. It's kind of like a free clinic that I'm going to, but they're taking my Medicaid. I'm not happy there, I'm not getting good care. (Survivor, interview)
• You need detailed information about where you can go for pregnancies. They only have a general doctor. (Survivor, interview)
• People that come to the shelters now are inevitably folks that have no other resources. But it's worse than that. It's more complicated. The folks that are coming to us are also people that have very, very complex needs. And it's been cutbacks in the health system and the substance abuse systems have taken place. ... So we're dealing with a population that by and large can be homeless, I don't mean the federal definition of homelessness which just means one night in the shelter, but that they have so many deficits, the level of pathology among our shelter clients is so high. And I'm talking about psychiatric and substance abuse kind of problems. (Shelter Staff)
• A lot of the kids that come through here can't even go to regular child care cause they have emotional disturbances or whatever. MHMR for the kids and adults; [we need] information on that. (Survivor, interview)
• Without that ongoing counseling they're really at risk of being sucked back into that relationship or hurt or injured or killed later on. (Shelter Staff)
• first off you're not crazy. you're healing. what you've described is a flashback and is part of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). it's part of the healing process and should go away in time as you process what you've been through (Survivor, posting)
• I am reading a book on how to identify and deal with "dangerous relationships" in the hope that this helps bring clarity to my mind until I can get to the counselor. (Survivor, posting)
Money: Some survivors may think in terms of economic assistance to pay basic bills and meet special expenses. Others are dealing with bad credit and even bankruptcy. Clear and explicit information on the social service agencies which can help them manage some of these problems is doubly helpful. First, it moves some of them from thinking in terms of what the abuser provides (such as a paycheck) towards what the social support system can provide (such as food stamps or debt counseling). Second, it encourages their independence since they must be actively engaged in using the system properly. The fear of lacking money, however, can be paralyzing.

- **[A common question we get is]** I'm scared I don't have any money to assist me. I'm having problems trying to relocate or move to a safer place and I just don't have the money. Are there services out there that can provide this for me? (Police Officer)
- **They sent me to get my emergency bill paid off. And they gave me medication and didn’t let me leave until I felt better.** (Survivor, interview)
- **Once they find out that they don’t have money to pay the bills, to pay the rent, to buy the clothes, meals for the kids, then this is very, very hard for them, so they decide to go back with the husband. That's one of the main things.** (Survivor, interview)
- **If the offender is the sole breadwinner, that's gonna keep the incident from being reported. “If I go to jail you'll be living on the streets. They'll take the kids cause you can't feed ‘em. Yadda yadda so on and so forth.” And that's how the offender sort of gains control over everything.** (Police Officer)
- **I have found some money to pay bills and informed everyone of the truth - all of a sudden people are trying to help me and giving me time to pay off what debt I have been left with.** (Survivor, posting)
- **i have not been found but am feeling very cut off. i found temporary work with a small group of women cleaning houses. i am starting to go crazy though. no car, no real money, no place to call home. the motel here is not horrible but it's not a home. and yes i understand that at least i have a roof and am alive but when will i be able to live again, really live.** (Survivor, posting)

Overlapping needs: To get a job, you need childcare. To get childcare, you need documentation. To get documentation, you need immunizations. To get immunizations, you need access to medical care. To get to the medical care, you need transportation. To get transportation, you need a job. The needs may overlap so thoroughly that just tracking the requirements, hours, addresses, and phone numbers of all the different agencies can be a problem. Certainly the combination of needs can be discouraging.

- **My advocate wanted me to stay in a maternity home and then the numbers she gave me wouldn't take my children. So that wasn’t something that was going to be an option for me. Then she referred me to a program where you had to be working for at least 2 weeks. But I couldn't find work because I’m pregnant.** (Survivor, interview)
- **I remember going so many places in the wheelchair, and when I got there they were like, oh you have to call and make an appointment before we can see you.** (Survivor, interview)
- **[They have a chance] to find out what responsibilities are going to fall on them, as far as paying bills, making sure everybody's clothed and fed. A lot of these women don't know anything about these responsibilities because all that controls taken from
them. Their decision skills are nil because they're not allowed to make decisions for themselves. (Shelter Staff)

- It's just never one issue that we're having to deal with. It's just very very seldom do we have someone come to us. I'm sorry, the only thing wrong with me is my husband is a batterer. That just doesn't happen. (Shelter Staff)
- I'm losing it...I really am. Part of me wants to push him away but then I don't want to be the one that pushed him over the edge. I'm going crazy...I really am. Part of me wants to check into the psychiatric hospital but that won't look good for fighting for my kids. The pain is unbearable...it really is. (Survivor, posting)

**Police – how best to work with them:** In addition to understanding the legal limitations under which police must operate, it's helpful to understand how to work with police to increase their physical safety and document their cases. Information on these tactics and strategies is difficult to glean and lessons often come too late.

- *We can write up a report violation of court order...so this particular subject can ... show the judge .... We don't have any problem doing that at all. A lot of times we don't but if they request it we will do it.* (Police Officer)
- *The police department gives you a piece of paper with your case number and then the office name and then the number. You don't know who you're calling or who you're going speak to or what to say when you call Or what they even do.* (Survivor, interview)
- *They called me and that they were telling me I didn't qualify [for victim’s compensation] because I didn't make a police report. Well, [I had called] the police and told them what happened. How come they didn't make a report?* (Survivor, interview)
- *Victims want police to be their friends and want to be able to ask for help and we encourage them, keep calling the police, keep calling the police. But the last time I did... and they'll explain that and we'll tell them but if you get it, at least get a report. At least there will be a record of the times that you have called.* (Shelter Staff)
- *One thing that comes to mind that made my life easier is the card that the sergeant, he kind of counseled me, if you're serious about changing your life you will do this, this, and this. You will document, you will report. I had the support of this particular sergeant and I'd pull out his card and say this sergeant suggested I do A, B, and C. It validated my call to them. It made my life easier having that card, that kind of said, I'm not a crazy person, I really have a reason for calling you out. It puts you in a different light with them.* (Survivor, interview)
- *[In response to a posting from someone whose abuser is a police officer] I'm wondering if you could try contacting his superior officers. be sure to include anything to back up your story (witness's, police reports, doctors reports, etc.). maybe putting the heat on him would take the heat off you. if he's facing an internal investigation he'd back off.... I also think that police are only allowed to use their resources in the course of an investigation. If he's using police resources to try to track you down then he could face some pretty tough disciplinary stuff. at the least he may be cut off from those resources. just a thought. you could probably contact them*
via email using a mass email server like yahoo or hotmail that wouldn't be traceable. (Survivor, posting)

- When you call for an officer, explain the situation. Try to calm down. We hate hysterical callers -- because we can't understand what they are saying, and that puts them and the officers in more danger. The most important things dispatch needs to know for the officers are: 1. Location-- you would be amazed at the number of people that say "I am here at my house" & they are calling on a cellphone! 2. What is happening -- not that he hit you yesterday- not that he is always drinking. We need the HERE and NOW. 3. Weapons-- we need to know if he has a gun or knife NOW. Not so much that he used to carry a gun all the time, back in the day. 4. Controlled substances -- We need to know if he is on drugs, especially because some, like cocaine and meth give him a sense of invincibility, making a violent confrontation more likely. 5. Vehicles -- if he leaves -- tell us what he left in. And, try to be detailed about it. "A black pickup" just doesn't help much. A "black ford f150 supercrew with "cowboys" on the back is a lot easier to spot. And, if you can get the license plate- we can give a lookout on the radio and the officers can find him faster. Above all, be respectful to the officers - if you do not agree with what they are saying or doing, ask for a supervisor-- ask the officer or call dispatch and request one. Almost all 911/disp centers record the calls, and we do not refuse to send a supervisor, ever. You can also file a complain with Internal Affairs. (Survivor, posting)

Relocation, other shelters, other cities: Some survivors are eager to learn about the possibilities of evading stalking by going to a shelter in another city or about the possibility of shifting to another shelter if transitional housing isn’t available by the time their term is up. In addition, the BB survivors spoke often of relocating as a tactic to use in their efforts to resist their abusers’ emotional manipulation; they were less likely to return if they relocated entirely.

- They need a listing to other shelters too. Because your time runs out here and you cannot do it in 30-60 days. The only place you refer you to is salvation army. There's a shelter in [other local towns]. (Survivor, interview)

- These larger shelters that are sometimes located in cities have the support from corporations that are headquartered there and us we don't have anything. (Shelter Staff)

- I moved in with relatives because I didn't feel safe living alone and he found out where I was within a week and dumped food down into the vents on my new car and smeared other food all over it. He put pieces of metal in the tires of my car...I could go on and on and on. (Survivor, posting)

- I am looking for a place to live in a different city... to get away from the "sucking me back in" stuff. It is not easy, especially if you are in close physical proximity to him. My ex is so manipulate that I think the only way I can get and stay permanently away is to move a distance away so that when I'm home on a weekend, he won't come by, or I won't give in and see him, etc. (Survivor, posting)
Shelter and its services: Despite full shelters and great strides in bridging people into shelters, many are still unaware of the shelters, how to find them, and what services they offer. The high quality of shelters, the expertise of shelter staff, and the wide array of services available in some communities also require information dissemination.

- I never knew about it. Never even knew it existed. Never knew what this place was. (Survivor, interview)
- I've had some ladies say that they didn't even know this place was here until the police brought them over. (Shelter Staff)
- It's really that they're so isolated that they don't know about us. (Shelter Staff)
- They probably don't realize they have any choices. We're talking about somebody that's walking in our door, making the call for the first time. Choices, services are limited, as we are a rural community, but they're not aware that there's anything out there at all. Even to the point that there's a shelter that can help. So that's a stumbling block for them right there for them to be able to accept that. (Shelter Staff)
- That's probably why some people don't even think about calling the shelters, they have no idea of really what they entail or involve. I think often times it's fear of the unknown. (Shelter Staff)
- I knew there was homeless shelters, but I didn't realize there was shelters for battered women. (Survivor, interview)
- On a routine basis we really explain the legal assistance and legal options that are available to them. We clearly really go into depth about our shelter service. Mostly because there's a lot of myths about shelters. (Shelter Staff)
- I've only been gone a few weeks, but I found a womens resource center nearby, they know how to help us. They have seen all the tricks in the book and they can help you deal with all this. (Survivor, posting)
- We had some really nice ladies come in from the Women's Refuge and they discussed the facilities there, the safety of the women being paramount. The centre is staffed 24hrs a day. (Survivor, posting)
- Beware of manipulative behaviour from him. Talk to the DV counsellors in your area. it's ok to reach out and ask for help while you're going through this! They would help you to see things more clearly and to begin focusing on yourself and how you feel..not how he feels. They would also help with the kids deal with all of this too. (Survivor, posting)

Transportation: Getting around to search for work, apply for social service support, and meet children’s needs is difficult in terms of both logistics (which bus to take when) and personal safety. Accurate information can be quite useful but is not always readily available. Basic transportation is also problematic, particularly in smaller communities.

- What about a support group where other women could combine rides with people? (Survivor, interview)
- There's not enough case managers that we can go to and say, “hey, I need bus tokens, how do I ride the bus?” There's not enough staff to tell the people how to do that. (Survivor, interview)
[The information sheet they gave us] would say “places to get food.” But what it should have said was the bus numbers to get there ... So more information. They could put all that on a computer page, couldn't they? (Survivor, interview)

My abuser looks for me at the bus stop. (Survivor, interview)

And they never have a vehicle and we don't have public transportation. And so it's all these little things we have to work on and yes it does take time and that is very frustrating. (Shelter Staff)
Qualities that make information more useful for survivors

All information is not created equal. Even the best information can be delivered in the wrong way or at an inopportune time. One survivor can see a piece of information as useless in the morning but essential the following night. Although there is no “best” way to package information, there are several criteria which are worth considering whenever information resources are being developed for survivors.

Access by language: Well translated documents not only convey their factual content more clearly but they also convey a respect for those who read that language. Translating documents and having staff who speak even a modicum of another language can provide great reassurance.

• *Something really important is to let women that only speak Spanish know that their language barrier shouldn't be an issue in leaving a domestic violence relationship. A lot of people ... won't leave because they think that there's not going to be anyone to help them in Spanish. Having people know that anywhere they go there will be somebody that speaks Spanish that can help them is important.*  (Survivor, interview)

• *They'll call one time and there won't be somebody that speaks Spanish at that certain point, but there may be later, so letting them know don't only call one time.*  (Survivor, interview)

• *Since our bilingual counselor started, she has probably brought in... 40 new intakes. I think it's a language issue and having that knowledge of what's available to them.*  (Shelter Staff)

• *I think they feel a sense of trust from anyone here, but especially someone speaking their language, that even helps them trust you even more.*  (Shelter Staff)

Accurate, current information: It’s extremely difficult to keep social service information updated and accurate, especially when it is detailed enough to be really useful. Unfortunately, misinformation can lower trust levels. Some survivors reason that poor information about something small may mean that information about something crucial, like filing charges, could also be inaccurate.

• *But some of the things that they say in the pamphlet it's not true.... like there's one section that says that they will help ... get you an apartment, they'll help you get a job and this and that. And I have 'til [a certain date] and then after that I might have to move anyway.*  (Survivor, interview)

• *Funding changes  What they're able to do at this agency this year versus 6 month or a year from now may change. We may have them under transportation, financial assistance and something else, then all of a sudden they're not doing one of those three.*  (Shelter Staff)

• *And I think that if you are hearing a bunch of different things from different entities that's gonna make it even worse. I mean it's hard enough when everything kind of falls into place for a client the trauma of leaving or taking your kids, starting a different life and all of that, that's hard enough without getting a lot of misinformation or conflicting ideas from people.*  (Shelter Staff)

• *[If] your office is a mess and you look like you can't even find your own head, then that trust is going to be completely different. Cause they're gonna look at you and
say, “Ok, she can't even figure out which way is up. How is she gonna know where I need to go?” It goes with both, consistency and trust. But establishing that trust is part of that consistency in the paperwork. (Shelter Staff)

• [There] is that feeling of “Well, my advocate doesn't know anything.” .... Once they feel that once, you're done. Once they feel that one thing, your rapport with them is going to be damaged. So no matter how great your information is ...., if the delivery and all that is not there, they're not gonna grasp it, or they're not gonna want to grasp it. (Shelter Staff)

• I think that that's one of the things that's most time consuming and staff. It's trying to keep up with those resources. Because especially with nonprofits, they seem to change their phone numbers. They seem to disappear, reappear over here with different names. They're based on grants, so suddenly their grant only lets them service people that have HIV, so ok, well, who knew that? (Shelter Staff)

Can be kept: The ability to keep information for later reference can be critical. Although information may have to be delivered at a crisis point, if it can be reviewed later, then its impact may be substantially greater.

• She's saying that the pamphlets helped her a lot. Copies for people. That also helps for them to keep and have for later reference. (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

• And some of them have said that they've gone and hidden our name on cards and everything because they're planning to come back. (Shelter Staff)

• I keep all the information that I get because it could be helpful later on. You never know what you might need and you would have it in here. I keep everything. I keep it in a folder. (Survivor, interview)

Individualized information and control: Although there are certainly patterns in the information needs of survivors, the specifics vary widely. Having information that can be customized and put in their direct control is both useful and empowering.

• It's like this, you have housing, mental, legal. There's such an array, my legal issue may not be domestic. It might be something totally different. It needs to be more itemized to that person's need because her needs are way different than my needs. (Survivor, interview)

• We all get the same information and it doesn't fit us. (Survivor, interview)

• People come with different reasons. They see us as one. Some people are not here for the same things. And they're not giving us the resources to say hey this is your situation, this is what you need to do. It's hard. We're trying to accomplish something but we're always hitting roadblocks. (Survivor, interview)

• What makes you trust information? By giving you an appointment, by being able to speak to someone that really understands your situation. (Survivor, interview)

• I think a phone number where we can call and one on one basis because everybody's different. (Survivor, interview)

• You need to be able to pick and choose, the cafeteria plan for information delivery. (Shelter Staff)
• Ideally you'd be able to have everything like a vending machine. That you could say, ok this person has. Let's say she's Spanish speaking, she has 3 children, she lives in a mobile home park outside of the city, so, and there's all these other issues out here. Ok, I need to go on the computer click this, this, this, fact-sheet, client support sheet and print that out and hand that to her. So then I don't have to tell her again. (Shelter Staff)

Multiple formats: Phone, print, media, personal, and digital formats can provide layered access, permitting survivors to get at the same information in whatever way is best for them at a given moment.

• You have to have a variety of way in which information can be communicated and then checks on if that information is communicated correctly. ... I can think of 15 people right now, the constancy is great but really what they would need is somebody to say it again again again. Or say it and then print it and read it and then look on the website, all of those things. Or just give me a piece of paper I'm done, I can do it. (Shelter Staff)

• I can tell you that most of my tools came from people, came from my counselor, came from the police officer, came from the attorney at the family protective unit saying you need to be careful he is crazy. That type of validation clicked in me and gave me the strength to fill out those 20 million forms, to go to court, to follow up on stuff that needed to be taken care of. If it hadn't been for those people, the people aspect, the human aspect, I don't know that the other stuff would have clicked. (Survivor, interview)

Private, safe, accessible: Knowing that an information source is physically safe, confidential, and reasonably accessible makes it much more likely to be used.

• [When] advertising [the shelter, you] would be making sure the location wasn't public. It is in the phone book, but still keep it secure. (Survivor, interview)
• I asked her did she know of a place where I could go where I would be safe and she gave me a pamphlet and it had safe place on it. (Survivor, interview)
• I don't want them to say I can't help you let me go talk to this person. I don't want that person to know my problems, my issues. (Survivor, interview)
• I feel like if we had something like that on our website, more kids could go in and just ask questions about DV. And we offer services for sexual assault victims as well. I think that would be helpful and they could get their questions answered confidentially. I know not everybody has access to computers. But it seems like more and more computers are becoming pretty common. Even in households that you think they might not have access. (Shelter Staff)
• if the places had access to computers and online and we can use our emails as long as we do it safely. But then you get into privacy issues. (Survivor, interview)
• Somebody was talking outside one day, saying there was another place, the same as a domestic violence shelter, but it was horrible. If there are good and bad ones, somebody higher up needs to oversee and monitor and there should be guidelines and
restrictions and they should be checked up on. Because if there are places that are scaring people away, those places should be dealt with. (Survivor, interview)

Quick response:  The pressure of shelter and legal deadlines may appear even heavier than it is in light of the limbo in which pervades the rest of their lives. A responsive resource that provides, monitors, or follows-up with information can be as encouraging as it is informative.

- They let you file a criminal compensation form. But it takes 3 weeks to a month for them to process your application and some people are denied. Are they really going to relocate you? [I'd] like that information in the packet [that’s given to new shelter clients]. Yes. They wait so long to give it to you. (Survivor, interview)
- People when you call them, this is who you need to speak to and they're on vacation And you know coming in here you're running out of time. Your clock is already ticking And they remind you, “hey this is your exit date.” (Survivor, interview)
- Once you get in, it takes you like 2 weeks because you have to make appointments for everything, but once you get in, you usually get the questions answered. But for those 2 weeks you're scared to death. What am I gonna do? How am I gonna do it? (Survivor, interview)

Reassurance: Through tone, repetition, facts, examples, and other informational elements, providing reassurance that basic needs will be met can make it possible for survivors to make a move towards safety.

- She's saying that the pamphlets give all the information about safety and legal advocacy about counseling, that we would help with food, that we would help get them an apartment and everything so she knew she wouldn't be on her own. So that helped take a lot of the fear out. It wasn't just leaving an abusive relationship and not getting any help. (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)
- I was comfortable [with my counselor]. I trusted her. She's like you need to come here, I'm like, ok. She explained to me a lot of the rules before I even came. So I knew. (Survivor, interview)
- A friend of mine came and stayed at the shelter for a little while and she said it was a good program, something that would really help me and so I took her advice. And she had 2 kids around the same age my kids are and she said the kids really loved it. Like all the tours and the way the house is set up they could pretty much just be there at home. So the kids felt really comfortable here, makes it easier for the mom. (Survivor, interview)

Specific, detailed information: Although problems with information overload can be paramount at crisis points, once the move towards change has begun, then having specific, detailed information can provide control and increase effectiveness.

- I called 211 and they gave me a list of places. And from that list I could pick which ones I could go to or which ones were appropriate for what my family needed. (Survivor, interview)
• In the phone book they have a list of social service numbers. If that list was more clear, like if they broke it down into different things that you might need help with I think that would help a lot of people. Instead of having to guess what each organization is for. (Survivor, interview)
• Rather than keeping going to the front office and bothering them, or going to your advocate and her saying well I don't have time right now and then you have to wait longer and that gets you frustrated because you want to do it but you don't have the resources to do it. (Survivor, interview)
• They have resources here but they're not detailed enough and we end up running around like a chicken with our head cut off. (Survivor, interview)
• They like the numbers with information Even just a brief description Summarizing, what they can help with Like we help with getting child support, counseling, housing, food, clothing. We need to know. You'll get a number, you don't know what they do. (Survivor, interview)
• A database, or a program, or some entity that has information on all the programs available in the united states. You run a query, you input your information, your own particular, I'm 35, I have 4 kids, I have this education, I don't have a job, I live here, whatever. Put it in there and it spits it out to all these different organizations to where you get a report that says you qualify for A, B, C and D. (Shelter Staff)

Support and understanding: Facts without respect for the survivor can be ineffective, even harmful. Trusting the information begins with trusting its source. An empathetic, rather than a judgmental, tone is helpful.
• The main thing is that you're not alone. You let people know that there is other women that are in your situation. And that is said over and over and over in the groups by new people that come in. I never knew that there was other women going through what I was going through. (Survivor, interview)
• I think that if someone handed out those little cards that had actually been in the program themselves it would make it even a little easier. (Survivor, interview)
• Even if you don't resolve all your situation inside the shelter at least you know you will be supported by the shelter staff, that you will receive information, in the meantime that the person looks for a place to leave or to move. (Survivor, interview)
Information myths that hinder survivors’ efforts

Some of these myths have a nugget of truth in that they can be accurate under certain conditions. They are not, however, as universally accurate as some survivors believe. All of them inhibit the movement towards a genuinely safer life.

Abandoning the home: And then there's the myth, which must be something legally that happens in Mexico. It's called abandoning the home. So that's used a lot too. If you abandon the home, even if you take the children with you, that's seen in a very negative way, I don't know if you can get arrested for that or if somehow he has an advantage of getting the kids in Mexico with that. (Shelter Staff)

Abuse only “counts” if it leaves physical marks: Sometimes people don't think they're abused because they're not in a corner crying covered with welts. (Shelter Staff)

Abuser visitation requires unsupervised contact with the children: [We explain that the court can say to the abuser that] you want to see your children, fine. You're going to see them here, which is safe haven, under supervision, you can see them all you want there, an hour, 2 hours, but you can't leave the facilities. (Police Officer)

Counseling can mark you as an unfit parent in a custody hearing: No one can use it against you that you are seeing a psych. I checked b/c my ex was throwing it in my face, I ran it by my lawyer and she just laughed. She said why are the courts going to penalize you for being in therapy to deal with the aftermath of his abuse. In fact if you start talking to your doctor about the abuse (not only will it help you heal) but it will be recorded professionally and might actually help you in a court situation if you need evidence of the abuse (Survivor, posting)

CPS likes to take children from mothers who go to shelters: It should be just the opposite because CPS realizes in good faith if you leave an abusive relationship and go to the shelter you're trying to take care of your children and get them out of that situation, that's a very positive thing for the parent. They usually will not interact here in the shelter. They might come by and talk to them about abuse on the father's side, but they don't entertain the notion to take them away from the mother at that time. (Shelter Staff)

Domestic violence happens to certain people: I think so many people think that DV victims are uneducated and they're maybe a certain ethnicity or a certain socioeconomic level. And I'm not saying some of that isn't true. Our shelter is very reflective of our ethnic groups in town. Of our community. (Shelter Staff)

Domestic violence survivors and/or abusers are mentally ill: I think a lot of people in the community may think that domestic violence victims and the perpetrators are mentally ill. There's some people that will call our clients patients. And we said they're not patients, they're clients. Now I'm not saying you won't have a client that might also have a mental illness, but domestic violence isn't the cause of it, it's a separate issue. (Shelter Staff)
Filing and following through on charges will get the abuser jailed: And so there's the frustration of victims having, nothing happened to my husband when he assaulted me. He got either probation or some kind of adjudicated, if you do this again within a year, we'll file on you. Whatever those prosecutors do, but nothing really happened to him. (Police Officer)

Husbands can not rape their wives: Not only did he beat her up, but he sexually assaulted her. Their mind set is that “he's my husband, so it's implied consent.” In other words, “how would I even prove that in the first place?” So you have to educate them on that sometimes. (Police Officer)

Illegal to get a divorce when pregnant: In Texas it's illegal to get a divorce if you're pregnant. To get my divorce I had to hide my pregnancy. (Survivor, interview)

Police make the prosecution happen: And unfortunately a lot of people think... that once we arrest him, then that's when the punishment phase starts. ... The only reason we make an arrest is to take him before a magistrate without unnecessary delay. It's in the code of criminal procedures. ... They don't realize that no, he can make bond tomorrow morning if we don't do a 24 hour hold. And if this occurred at 4:30 in the morning he could be back at the house by 10.” (Police Officer)

Police protect the survivor in all cases: There's a time when they're in crisis and ... they think that we're going to come in and be knights on white horses and we're gonna save the day. And we're gonna get them a protective order and the judge isn't going to question the need for a PO. ... Well the judge goes, you don't have enough for a protective order. (Police Officer)

Protective orders provide safety: There's also the victim who comes in and does get the protective order. But doesn't understand the parameters of what that is, what that does for her. ... Doesn't really still understand that if that batterer doesn't have respect for the law, doesn't have respect for the protective order, it's not a foolproof safety net for her. It really all goes back I think to their sense of what he's willing to comply with and how safe he's willing to be and that protective order almost is a false sense of safety for them. (Shelter Staff)

Protective order requires filing charges: They can still do this without filing charges. The law does not say they have to have filed charges to get a protective order. (Police Officer)

Protective order requires giving address: [A protection order’s] not happening, cause that gives your address out and I ain't doing it. (Survivor, interview)

Shelters actually provide specific items: We help people with referral and advocacy and support in getting those needs met, but we actually, don't produce, we don't produce jobs, we don't produce housing. (Shelter Staff)
Shelters encourage survivors to get a divorce or leave the abuser: *How we open the door is that we tell them they don't have to leave their husbands. Cause that's a myth that a lot of them hear from the abusers. We are the divorce people. We tell them you don't have to leave him, but try to get to a healthier point where you can stand up to him and be able to demand things, or just to ask.* (Shelter Staff)

Shelters get CPS or INS to remove the children: *There are some concerns that their children will be taken away. That once they open the door of exposing their life that somehow CPS and entities that can get involved with children will and will potentially remove their kids or see them as unfit moms in particular.* (Shelter Staff)

Shelters only help those who stay there: *They don't realize how many services we provide. ... There are people who still believe you have to be staying with us to get any kind of service. You don't need to stay here, that's ok.* (Shelter Staff)

Shelters track employment to get money from survivors: *Her family is telling her that they're just trying to keep a tab on you to see how much you're making so they can see how much they can take away from you, no they're trying to help, no nothing's free.* (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

Shelters unsafe or bad in some way: *It's really a last resort. I really didn't want to come at all. I had a preconceived idea of what it was gonna be like. I thought it would be like a salvation army or something like that. I didn't want to do it. it was something that was unknown to me. It was scary. I wasn't used to asking for help from anybody about stuff like this.* (Survivor, interview)

Social service agencies provide many or few services: *I think that there are a lot of clients who either don't know that there's help available .. [while others] believe that there's a lot of help out there and there's really not. There's usually just enough to kind of get someone by. .... Either you think there's nothing or you think that maybe there's a whole lot. It's kind of in the middle.* (Shelter Staff)

Social service agency staff only speak English: *A lot of people she knows won't leave because they think that there's not going to be anyone to help them in Spanish.* (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

Survivor can be arrested in the ER if warrant is outstanding: *Sometimes people think if you go to the emergency room and you have warrants then you'll get arrested.* (Shelter Staff)

Survivor can be deported if she resists abuse: *There have been women that are undocumented that their husbands are actually citizens and have told them, “I'll have you deported and I'll keep the kids here. You're losing your kids and you're being sent away.”* (Shelter Staff)
Survivor can leave readily: *I'd have judges come up after my speaking and say “I never understood why she kept going back.” They don't realize that she's not just being stubborn...* (Shelter Staff)

Survivor is to be blamed for abuse: *It's “he was drinking and I know when he's drinking I'm not supposed to do that, so if I hadn't done that this wouldn't have happened.” As opposed to looking at the big picture. So it's an educational process with them to make the lights kind of come on.* (Police Officer)

Violation of a protective order gets the survivor arrested: *They're afraid to report that because they're afraid they'll be arrested. And that's specifically in the law that they can not be arrested. If they're not the subject of the order they can't be arrested for violating it.* (Police Officer)
Information-related tactics that abusers use

The use of inaccurate information can be countered, to some extent, by repetition of accurate information from trusted sources. Threats of abuse, however, can always be carried out if the circumstances are right. Nevertheless, knowing what information is being drummed into the daily lives of survivors can be useful.

Appear polite, reasonable, respectable to others: The scene that usually plays out when the police arrive is that she is absolutely hysterical, the husband might have just tried to kill her, choke her, and so she is screaming, yelling, not making a lot of sense and the husband is perfectly calm, explains to the police that it was a misunderstanding, she's just out of control and having a bad day, whatever lies he would tell. And if the police don't see bruises there's nothing they can do. (Shelter Staff)

Report or persuade survivor as crazy, hysterical, uncontrolled: In that turmoil of what's going on behind closed doors -- if enough of that is going on, the abuser can make the victim think she's going crazy because it's nonstop. (Shelter Staff)

Report survivor as a missing person: He's reported me as a missing person twice. The first time he had the police officer come to his apartment which I've never lived in and told him that he just came home the other day and I never came back and can he file me as a missing person. (Survivor, interview)

Report survivor as a violent mother: She's concerned about her abuser manipulating the system because a lot of times she would call the police, he would see that she was calling and he would leave before her with the child and meet the police beforehand before they got to her outside the house and be like, oh I'm leaving with the child because she's very violent and the police would let him go. So she's worried once he gets out of the jail he'll be able to manipulate the system again. (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

Shift responsibility for abuse aftermath: He used to say that every time I call the police it just makes OUR lives harder because he keeps having to leave work and go to appointments or have days off work to go to court ... he made me think [for a while] that if I contact the police that the aftermath of speaking to the police would incur all sorts of problems. I actually stopped contacting them for a while because I didn't want to make his life harder [when he had stressed he would make my life hell]. (Survivor, posting)

Threaten deportation or dumping: [Abusers say] “I can get my compadre to take you back to Mexico, say you have to go back because your mother's sick, drop you right across the border.” (Shelter Staff)

Threaten not to pay child support: [My husband said, ”] I don't have to pay child support. (Survivor, interview)
Threaten to manipulate children: *he's manipulating the children and she's trying to get that broken.* (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

Threaten to prevent a divorce: *He said he had more money he could just hire someone who could stop it [the divorce]. And he said that the whole time we were together.* (Survivor, interview)

Threaten to take children, legally or otherwise: *[My husband said,""] I'll get custody of her automatically because I'm a Moroccan citizen and men have all the rights. But that wasn't true cause she was born here. (Survivor, interview)

Threaten and/or commit violence against survivor and/or children: *Within the first year he pushed me. He has also shaken me, slammed me into the bed, held me down, and raped me. ... I'm now finishing my last year of college and I've been with him since I can remember. I don't think the abuse was nearly as bad as some people and I feel really fortunate about that.* (Survivor, posting)

Use superior English to persuade police: *And he knew perfect English and she didn't know any so he would manipulate the police.* (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

Use visitation to scare or manipulate survivor: *I hate to take money from anybody. Even my boyfriend because he'll have visitation rights and I don't want to have nothing to do with him no more. I don't want my kids around any more because he was doing weed. And all that drinking. I'm scared. If they give him visitation rights he'll take them and he'll try to collect child support money from me cause he's money hungry.* (Survivor, interview)
Information tactics that shelter staff use

Housing help: do site visits so the information given is first-hand and detailed
• [Clients] have such a big need to get information. ... we do site visits because one of the things that the clients really need is for somebody to say “I've been there and it's an OK place.” ‘Cause us giving them a list and saying these are transitional places, that's not the same thing as somebody saying I've been there, this is how it's set up, it's a clean place. That gives you a different type of reassurance. ... They'll have some more information. (shelter staff interview)

Job help: create in-house classes that can provide in-home income and enhance the possibility of getting a basic job outside the home for immigrants
• They decided to have those classes ... because this is a way that they can make a little money and also to support their own families. ... They decided to have English and computer because that's what they need to have a better future or a better life. And the other two because they can make a little bit of money because most of them they don't have papers, so they can do little works at home. (shelter staff interview)

Transportation help: connect with colleagues in other agencies to bridge survivors from one system to another
• If they say ... I just know I need to get out of here, we may call some of the shelters in areas that we're familiar. If they don't have transportation we try to help them get money for bus tickets and we work very closely with all the service agencies in town. We have an incredible rapport and wonderful working relationship with all the other service organizations, all the other non-profits.

Immigrants, legal help: assist survivors in filing reports of abuse in Mexico
• It's also helpful to have people know it's national, that you're going to get help nationally. Even though you're here, that if your situation happened in another place, we'll help you make a report. The violence happened in Mexico and when she got here we helped her file a report in Mexico. It's important for people to know that if it didn't happen here, we can still do something about it. (Survivor, interview via shelter staff translator)

Work with police: help in training them on defensive wounds
• When I've done training with law enforcement one of the things I ask them is, “Are you ever taught what are offensive and defensive marks?” And they kind of look at me. It's like scratches are almost always defensive, bites are defensive. So if you see scratches and bites on a man it's probably because he was holding her or hurting her and all she could do was scratch or bite. If I'm gonna go at someone, I'm not gonna go with my nails or my mouth. I'm not going to. It's not going to be offensive. As a woman I would probably use a weapon or a frying pan or something if I really want to hurt him because I know my fists will not hurt him.

Work with WIC: bridge women to shelter services
• *WIC helps us in lots of ways cause that's the only place normally the abuser will go and say I'll be back in an hour so they like, sometimes they know this and they rush through their paperwork and everything and give us about half an hour or 45 minutes whatever time is left from their interview for her to talk to us. So we've made several connections to WIC.*
Information tactics that police and victim services officers use

Housing: make local connections to get information on apartments
- You know how we did it when I first came here? I happened to become friends with people that worked in an apartment complex, because they were victims of crime. ... so that's how I get victims apartments. (victim services officer)
- My big thing is if someone takes a step forward,... I don't want to keep giving them numbers where they're turned down. I'm trying to build them up, not knock them down. So sometimes a lot of our job is spent calling around, saying hey you got any openings, you got this, what's your waiting list? (victim services officer)

Documentation: document violations of civil orders
- If it is an ongoing pending court issue for custody..., on the request of the plaintiff we can write up a report -- violation of court order, which is a civil order, but it's primarily for documentation. So this particular subject can go to court later on down the road and show the judge that “hey this guy was over here doing this and this and this trying to violate your court order.” We don't have any problem doing that at all. A lot of times we don't but if they request it we will do it. (Police Officer)

Documentation: document criminal evidence at crisis points
- I teach the in-service classes. And I try to remind the patrol officers, “Don't rely on the detectives to do follow up on the ... DV assaults.” I go through the whole thing, the cycle of violence. ... They get into the honeymoon phase and they're not gonna be calling. Or they moved or whatever it is. All the evidence has to be right then, when they're still in that crisis mode. You don't get it when they're in crisis mode you're not gonna get the evidence, nine times out of ten. (Police Officer)

Documentation: document violations of PO via follow-up calls
- Victim services is really good about doing calls, follow up calls. They'll ask them, “How are things?” “Fine. He called last night from jails 3 times and said when he got out he was going to burn the house down and kill me.” This is important. Every call from jail is recorded. So what's cool is they tell us that, we can get a copy of that, burn it on cd, and then we can file retaliation charges, which is a felony. They really have to help us, but we know from experience that if our victim services don't follow up with phone calls, we're not going to know about the new crimes that have taken place since the arrest. They're not educated enough to know to call and tell you about those things. (Police Officer)

Contacts: make special contact with prosecutor on major cases
- If there's a specific case that we want, that we believe as law enforcement needs to be prosecuted, I have the county attorney's cell phone number. I'll call him and say, “Hey, I really think we need to look this one over. I'd really like to take this one all the way.” And they'll run with it. They really like to, especially with our county attorney that we've got now, he really likes for us to be involved. He's not going to
outright dismiss something without counseling with us on it, getting our feelings. He's
told me in the past, “If there's a case that you think needs to go, call me up or email
me or something or let me know and we'll flag it to make sure we follow through.”
(Police Officer)

Contacts: make special contact with jail officers on undocumented abusers
• We have a good rapport with the jail. Usually when we take somebody up there that
we know is undocumented, we'll tell them, “Hey I think he's illegal.” ... Whether it
means just deporting them and inconveniencing them for a week ‘til they can get
back, it's a week that they're not there harming the victim. Usually they have to clear
up the criminal charges before ICE will do anything with them or before border
patrol will deport them. Especially if it's a felony charge, they're gonna hold ‘em
here until we can dispose of that. (Police Officer)

Contacts: exchange training experiences with shelter staff
• I teach a part of their volunteer program and they come and teach a part of my ...
class.... I went through their volunteer training and I've even gone up and answered
the hotline, battered women's shelter. That's all I'm allowed to do. .... Very good
working relationship. (Police Officer)

Contacts: make special contact with victim services counselors on major cases
• Every so often I'll still get a report that will indicate that the victim has told the
officer that “he hit me because I didn't have the supper on time when he got home
and it's my fault that this happened and I don't want charges filed on him 'cause I
should have had the supper ready when he got home from work.” Things like this, not
understanding that that doesn't make any difference whatsoever. But this victim that I
see is acting this way, I make sure that she is contacted by a counselor and if it's a
Spanish speaking victim then it's assigned to a Spanish speaking counselor. (Police
Officer)
• Any type of incident where there was weapons used, guns, knives, if there was serious
violent injury, broken nose, person got really beat bad. Incidents where the officer
documents that he's really concerned about the complainant, those types of incidents
are the ones where a counselor will make contact with that person and make sure that
they understand what the options are and what they need to do to follow up. (Police
Officer)
Useful Resources

A number of resources are viewed as helpful in that they provide information, services, and/or material items. While some of these resources are used but not highly praised, all are valued to some degree.

211: 211 has been a big step towards helping streamline resource directory and resource information. I think they've been very thorough. (Shelter Staff)

CPS: They don't really talk about protective orders, you have to find that out through CPS. I did that for the safety of my daughter. (Survivor, interview)

Internet: We need more computer access here. Use it for jobs, housing. Resources they're not telling us, or they don't know. (Survivor, interview)

Legal official: The DA’s office will contact her and let her know when they're going to court, or if it's going to go to court. If he pleads guilty then the DA’s office will still sometimes contact her cause they want to know how she feels about it and they want to explain to her what may happen to him, what punishment he may get, so they can get an idea as to what type of punishment they want to set when he goes to that date. (Police Officer)

Library: Absolutely. Many of our clients go to the library. (Shelter Staff)

Maternity home: They have a program just for pregnant women that I wish I would have known about 4 months ago. As you take and do the program you get to earn things for your baby or for yourself. If you're homeless you can stay there, if you're pregnant and don't have a place to go. (Survivor, interview)

Pamphlets, books: [This book] gave women giving their stories. Slapped me in the face. The women telling the story. Different women from different backgrounds telling the same story. And it was me and him. ... It was incredible. Incredibly blunt and scary, but true. Yeah and they're not talking to you, at you or for you. They're talking about them. So it's not a threat. I was just going, oh my god, this is him. (Survivor, interview)

Phone book: I would get the phone book and start calling anything I could think of and say I'm in a wheelchair and I'm homeless how can you help me. (Survivor, interview)

Police officers and/or their documentation: A lot of times there's a phone number on that little card and if they don't understand they will call and they'll say the officer gave me this card and told me to call this number and we'll explain it to them then at a time when they're not quite as upset as when it immediately happened and that helps. (Police Officer)
Pregnancy resource center: *Some of the better places I've gone to get help were the pregnancy resource center. They do the pregnancy test for Medicaid, but they also give you ultrasounds there and they don't charge for those. They let you pick your own baby items. Maternity clothes. So it feels better cause you get to go in a room and pick something out. They're more willing to help you after you have the baby also.* (Survivor, interview)

Safe house and safe house staff: *And there at the shelter they will tell them also of different places, how to get help. The shelters are good at it, they'll try to get employment for them and things like that so they can better their lives, leave their history in the past and just move forward.* (Police Officer)
Problematic Resources

Even the best resources may have problems from someone’s perspective while others are universally recognized as deficient. Addressing these concerns, where possible, sometimes requires information.

Family crisis advocates

• *A lot of times they're like in the way because they're trying to do their job too and we're trying to do our job, but they're a big help.* (Police Officer)
• *They like to help investigate and prosecute the case too. We couldn't do it without them, but sometimes they don't stay in their lane.* (Police Officer)

Legal officials or processes

• *If CPS is involved, CPS's attorney is our county attorney and the person who represents the mother in a PO hearing is the county attorney. And that's going to be a conflict of interest. If CPS is involved because children were hurt, they have to find their own attorney. They either have to go to legal aid, which is a nightmare, or they have to get a private attorney to get a PO.* (Police Officer)
• *The people who tend to prosecute those cases are the ones who just graduated from law school. You don't tend to be doing misdemeanor domestic violence assaults with 20 years experience. Yeah they're eager, but they don't have the experience.* (Police Officer)
• *The prosecutors don't have the time. And the training again. They don't teach you how to try cases in law school apparently. I have not been a lawyer, I don't know, but I've been doing this for 30 some odd years, but you get these kids out of law school and they may have been A students on doing research, but they don't know when to object, what is good evidence. They don't understand. He'd call in a DV expert to explain it's common to recant. I know they can qualify experts. I think the young lawyers don't understand they can do that. I know that the police are doing a much better job than they were. There's always room for improvement, But right now I think the prosecution is the next place. That there was a trend in the last 10-15 years to improve police performance in DV. Now the training needs to be towards the prosecutors.* (Police Officer)
• *EPOs are a dime a dozen, easy to get. Two-year is a little more difficult to get. That sends a bad message to the victim because here they've cooperated and they've gone through all this drama with relocating and the financial problems and the job and dealing with their family and coworkers. It's embarrassing. And they've gone through all this and here they're three months into it and they're getting denied a protective order.* (Police Officer)

Police

• *Police officers [keep] sending people up here for restraining orders. We do not do restraining orders. We do protective orders. Restraining orders are done by attorneys; they cost money.* (Shelter Staff)
• [Police don't know] what it takes to get a protective order. They'll send them up here when they don't have enough to get a protective order. (Shelter Staff)

Shelters
• A woman's shelter is a wonderful place. It's a great thing that it's there, but I wouldn't want to stay there. I don't think you'd want to stay there. And you uproot your family. You gotta live in this dormitory for 2 weeks. (Police Officer)
• They get to the women's shelter and want to sign non-prosecution statements. I don't know if it's what they're being told, or it's this part of the cycle of violence thing ... and they've had time to cool down and be safe. (Police Officer)
Concerns that survivors see in their dealings with responders

- Shelters need more medical information: *The three shelters I've been to all need to have some kind of information about different dentists. Things like that that has to do with hearing, vision, everything.* (Survivor, interview)

- Shelter information needs to be more applicable to individual cases: *Like he needs school supplies and school clothes and stuff like that. And they told me call this number and they're gonna help you. When I call the number they say well he's not gonna go to [our] school district so we can't help him cause he's really not an [area] student. And they didn't have any resources so I called 211 and they gave me a list of places. And from that list I could pick which ones I could go to or which ones were appropriate for what my family needed.* (Survivor, interview)

- Social services agencies need to coordinate and/or survivors need help in developing coordination skills: *I had this assumption that I would go to the authority, to the police and there was some big database that was going to spit out my information to any and all programs so that all I had to do was tell one person. Like go to the police and it would spit it out to a database that would go to the AFDC, to the food stamps, to the Medicaid, to the school programs, to any program that myself and my children qualified for having no job, no money and no education other than basic high school education and some certificates. That I would have that information dispersed into all these little cubicles, but in fact they are a bunch of little cubicles that don't talk to each other. And the fear factor of having to repeat that information 20 times to 20 different organizations because A doesn't talk to B doesn't talk to C doesn't talk to D. That was part of my misconception and confusion. I thought all I have to do is go to one authority and that's gonna take care of everything. When in fact the challenge is going to all these different organizations.* (Survivor, interview)

- Police need additional training to recognize defensive wounds and abuser manipulation: *I had a protective order against my ex ... He lured me into the house ... as I dropped my daughter off and proceeded to choke me .... Then he grabbed her and ran to MY car and locked her in it telling me that I would never see her again - all the while she was clawing at him to get away from him ... I ran to a neighbors and called the police. Apparently they didn't have my PO on file and since he had scratches on his face (never mind they were from my daughter) we were both arrested. Later mine was dismissed b/c they realized he was an abuser and looked at his record but none the less - I have an assault charge on my record.* (Survivor, posting)
Addendum

More information available

This report summarizes key findings of these two studies. Additional findings are also available upon request pertaining to a number of matters which do not lead so directly to broader information analysis. These are well worth examination, however, and continued analysis will include them fully. Meanwhile, if any of them are of particular interest to you, then please let me know. I would be pleased to share these additional data at your request. The topics listed below exemplify the additional data areas.

- Affective reactions and responses of survivors including anger, appreciation, shame, fear, guilt, hope, motivations, and more
- Abuser tactics and means of manipulating and threatening survivors
- Reasons that survivors stay in or return to an abusive relationship
- Results of leaving an abusive relationship
- Reasons for contacting police officers
- Suggestions on how to educate people about shelters
- Means by which survivors first learned about shelters
- Ways in which survivors have been inadvertently misdirected
- Police department connections, concerns, frustrations, patterns
- Shelter connections, concerns, frustrations, patterns
- Victim services connections, concerns, frustrations, patterns
- Use of the Internet and safety in cyberspace

More information sought

This report is the result of one researcher’s analysis, perspective, and experience. As you read any part of it, you bring your own expertise and perspective to bear. If you have any feedback, then please share it. If you see any gaps, then please fill them. If you would be interested in a more detailed analysis of your own organization’s information patterns and effectiveness, then please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you.