

# **Intimate Partner Violence**

## **What Can We Do?**



**Oklahoma Partnership  
for Public Deliberation**



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## **What Can We Do?**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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#### **Intimate Partner Violence**

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Every year several million adults, both women and men, experience violence at the hands of their intimate partner. The violence may be physical, emotional, or both and involve husband and wife, ex-spouses, boyfriend and girlfriend, or co-habiting adults (man and woman or same sex couples). The costs of Intimate Partner Violence are huge. Economic costs alone are estimated to be nearly 6 *billion* dollars each year. The emotional costs are uncounated. This issue book presents three perspectives on the question of what should be done to reduce the incidence and the emotional and economic costs of such violence.

### **APPROACH ONE**

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#### **Make it Easier to get Help**

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Those who support this approach believe the problem is that victims and perpetrators are not able to get help in many communities. Victims and perpetrators both experience roadblocks because of the lack of coordination among groups dealing with domestic abuse and violence. Common roadblocks include lack of funding, training, and biases toward both victims and perpetrators. This approach focuses on actions that would make it easier for victims to get help when they experience intimate partner abuse.

### **APPROACH TWO**

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#### **Stop the Bleeding**

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The effects of Intimate Partner Violence are huge and literally millions of women and men are victims each year. There are more than two million injuries each year. This approach calls for actions that will “stop the bleeding now” by more enforcement of current laws, harsher penalties for perpetrators, and additional assistance for victims.

### **APPROACH THREE**

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#### **Break the Cycle**

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Violence between intimate adults is a reflection of the violence in the American culture that has been a part of our society from the beginning. Many believe that we will make little progress in reducing the amount of Intimate Partner Violence unless we focus on actions that will “break the cycle” of violence that begets violence by one generation after another. This approach outlines actions that could be taken to help break the cycle.

### **CONCLUSION**

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# Intimate Partner Violence: What Can We Do?

## Introduction

*“If it were between countries, we’d call it a war. If it were a disease, we’d call it an epidemic. If it were an oil spill, we’d call it a disaster. But it is happening to women, and it’s just an everyday affair. It is violence against women.”*

[Beginning manifesto of the White Ribbon Campaign, a campaign begun by Canadian men in 1991.]

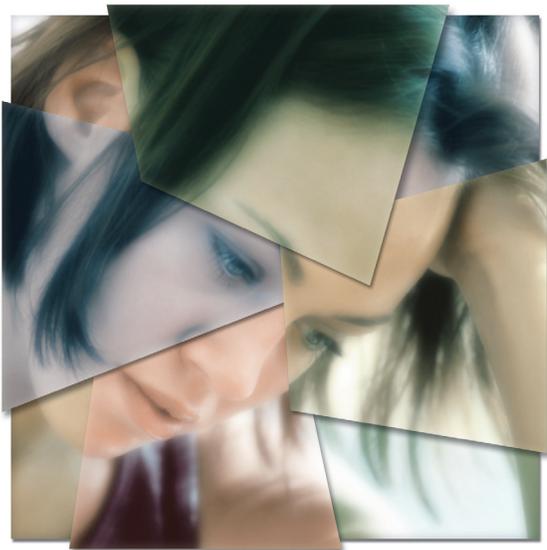
Violence between adult couples in American society, whether the traditional man/woman couple or couples of the same gender, happens to *millions* of people every year – at least three-fourths of them women. The consequences of this violence are huge. The emotional costs of stress, criticism, and loss of self-worth by the victims, their families, and the perpetrators are impossible to add up. The economic costs are staggering: lost wages to victims and perpetrators, costs born by business and industry due to lost productivity, costs for law enforcement, judicial proceedings, care of children, and

*Lori Norris’ estranged husband Brandon drove her to a park in southwest San Diego and stabbed her to death – 230 times! Their three-year old child is now without either parent.*

treatment for victims and perpetrators. Almost 1,700 people were murdered by their intimate partner during 2000. The more recent murder of Lacey Peterson and her unborn child by her husband is a brutal reminder of the violence that can occur between intimate partners.

Much of the violence within households has been referred to as domestic violence or abuse. Domestic violence and abuse includes a wide range of abuses between the adult man and woman in the household as well as abuse of children or the elderly. Since the mid-1990s, violence between husband and wife, ex-spouses, boyfriends and girlfriends, or cohabitating adults (including same sex couples) has been called *Intimate Partner Violence*.

Is Intimate Partner Violence a new problem, or a new name for an old problem? It is both. In times past, the violence and abuse to children or the elderly would have been included in the domestic abuse statistics. The adults in the household were often married, but not always. Abuse between same gender couples was rarely noted. In the last decade, more attention has been focused on the violence between intimate partners because it is believed that a reduction of violence between intimate partners would also lead to a reduction in the abuse of children and elderly members of the family. Also, the elimination of the negative role models of violent adults in the household would help break the cycle of abusive behavior from one generation to the next.



The designation, **Intimate Partner Violence**, became a central part of our discussion about domestic abuse when it was formally included in the Violence Against Women Act that was passed in 1994. It is now used by both governmental agencies and private, not-for-profit organizations and associations. The National Violence Against Women survey defined Intimate Partner Violence as “rape, physical assault, and stalking perpetrated by current and former dates, spouses, and cohabiting partners — with cohabiting meaning living together at least some of the time as a couple. Both same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants are included in the definition.” [NVAW Survey]

But there’s more to Intimate Partner Violence than the physical violence and stalking. Violent and abusive relationships between partners are about **power and control** of one’s partner. Perpetrators and batterers use many tactics to gain and sustain control. Some use children as pawns and accuse the partner of poor child care and parenting. They may threaten to hurt other family members. Controlling the finances of the household is a familiar tactic. Emotional abuse through put-downs, insults, and criticism is a common pattern of the abuser. Limiting the partner’s contact with other people, family, and friends is also a common behavior of the perpetrator.

Intimate Partner Violence takes many forms. The following story comes from a woman who finally sought help at a shelter in middle America:

*The marriage did not work. Ten years into the marriage the husband began to abuse drugs. Following the drug addiction, the physical and emotional abuse started. She was cursed, belittled, and her cheekbone cracked when he struck her. She lost teeth from punches to the face. Bruises covered her body. She and the children were chased as her abuser held a shotgun. He kidnapped and held their three*

*children hostage. On several occasions she and children tried to escape. After one attempt he shot the family puppy in front of them. Another time he threatened that he had four holes dug in the back yard, and if they tried to escape again he would kill and bury them all.*

Other examples, in the words of those who were abused:

*“Yes I did [experience violence]. The police would not help me. I called on one occasion to report I had a restraining order and he had beat me. The police wanted to know why I allowed him to violate the restraining order. That was the purpose of the phone call!”*

*“I was a single dad with two children and remarried. What an idiot I was. I should have spotted the warning signs. Whenever anything went wrong, she’d blame me...she took every opportunity to belittle me. When in a temper, she often hit me, but never in the face. I thought I deserved it because I was withdrawn and a bad husband – that’s what she kept saying. She forced me to have sex to become a good husband for her. I couldn’t leave because that would have meant leaving my children. I tried to tell my mother but what little I told, she said, “What are you doing to make her behave that way?” [Source: [www.dvirc.org.au](http://www.dvirc.org.au)]*

*“I was in a prior marriage that became physically violent to myself and my daughter as I was making the decision that I must leave the relationship. He had been emotionally, psychologically, verbally, and financially abusive/controlling for many years. As he saw his control over me decreasing, the abuse became physical.”*

An excerpt from a poem, written by a woman after years of Intimate Partner Violence and the completion of treatment, captures the situation of many who are victims of Intimate Partner Violence:

### Stop the Violence

*She was a shell  
to accept defeat  
Everyone told her  
that's the way it should be.*

*Was easier to stay  
empty and alone  
Where could she go?  
Who could she tell?*

Source: Anonymous Victim of Intimate Partner Violence

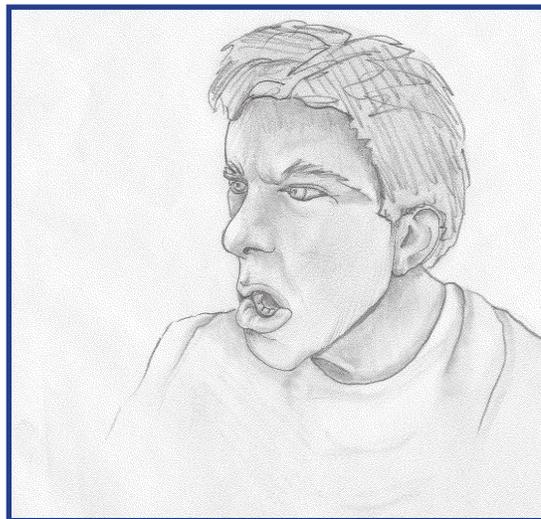
## Violence within Societies

Violence between individuals in societies is age-old and pervasive. In some cultures, child infanticide was a common practice. Other cultures had laws that permitted parents to put unruly children to death. Roman husbands could chastise, divorce, or kill their wives without consequences. Most women in India who have been abused by their intimate partner still say that wife beating is okay. India ranks third in the world in tolerance of domestic abuse. Only Egypt and Zambia rank higher.

In common law, women were subordinate to their husbands. This legal tradition, which is also a religious tradition, found its way into both English and American civil law. Reflecting common law attitudes, wife-beating was not considered to be a serious crime “so long as the beating was moderate.” English common law in 1768 included the right to “physically chastise an errant wife, provided that the stick was no thicker than his thumb” – and thus the “rule of thumb” was born. In the United States, we have had laws since the American Revolution prohibiting wife beating.

A poll of religious leaders in the late 1980s found 26 percent who stated they normally tell an abused woman that she should stay with her husband, “and trust that God would honor her action by either stopping the abuse or giving her the strength to endure;” 25 percent viewed the lack of submissiveness of the wife as the trigger that set off the abuse; the majority stated that it is better for a woman to tolerate some level of violence in the home...than to have a separation that might end in divorce...Preserving the marriage they argue is more important than the protection, safety, and integrity of the individuals within it. [Source: Matthew T. Herbst, Do Family Values Lead to Family Violence?, in *Quodlibet Journal*, Vol. 5, Number 2-3, July 2003]

Violence within families in America has been a part of our children’s literature as well as other media – particularly television. Many of us can recall the weekly scene of Ralph Cramden threatening to “send Alice to the moon” while shaking his fist in the air – but at least he never actually hit her! A number of the classic fairy tales parents have read to their children for generations contained family violence. Hansel and Gretel were abandoned by their parents in the forest to starve because “money was scarce.” Snow White was taken to the woods to be killed by the huntsmen by order of her stepmother, and The Old Woman in the Shoe beat her children soundly. Modern-day television programming, music, and



computer games expose both children and adults to uncounted numbers of violent acts between individuals – or their robotic representations.

Song lyrics often reflect the things that preoccupy large segments of society. Violence is prevalent in many of today's musical lyrics. Given the amount of time that people, especially young people, listen to music, it is certain that they are exposed to such material. Lyrics from one song makes the point:

*I'm just like my father  
But I am much worse.  
He hurt his mother  
I hurt mine worse*

*I'm just like my brother  
He hurt his wife  
I hurt mine first.*

## **How Big is the Problem of Intimate Partner Violence?**

Intimate Partner Violence is costly to victims, perpetrators, family members, communities, and society at large. The National Violence Against Women Survey (1995) estimated 5.3 million victimizations occur among women ages 18 and older each year. This violence results in nearly two million injuries, more than 550,000 of which require medical attention. Annually, victims lose a total of eight million days of paid work – the equivalent of more than 32,000 full time jobs – and nearly 5.6 million days of household productivity as a result of the violence.

The cost of Intimate Partner Violence to society and the individuals involved is estimated to reach \$5.8 *billion* per year. Of this total, \$4.1 billion is in direct costs of medical and mental health care and \$1.7 billion is in the indirect costs of lost productivity. Uncounted is the “cost” of the emotional stress experienced by the

victim, perpetrator, and children under the victim's care. The cost of police resources devoted to the area of Intimate Partner Violence is ten times larger.

The most recent data from the U.S. Department of Justice (2001) concludes that violent crime between intimate partners has declined nearly 50 percent since 1993. Still, Intimate Partner Violence accounted for 20 percent of all nonfatal violent crime experienced by women in 2001. As many as 324,000 women experience Intimate Partner Violence during their pregnancies each year. Estimates indicate that one million women and 371,000 men are stalked by intimate partners annually.

As staggering as the official statistics are, most intimate partner victimizations are not reported to the police. According to a 2001 study, approximately one-fifth of all rapes, one-quarter of all physical assaults, and one-half of all stalking perpetrated against female respondents by intimates were reported to the police. Even fewer rapes, physical assaults, and stalking perpetrated against male respondents by intimates were reported.

## **The Victims of Intimate Partner Violence**

The stories of victims make it clear that violence that occurs between intimate partners often happens repeatedly and over a long period of time. The character of Intimate Partner Violence is reflected through victim experiences :

*Anonymous: "...Yes, I lived in an abusive relationship...but for years there was so much mental abuse toward me and the children. I have three daughters, and all three are married to alcoholics or addicts, so I feel that my lack of being able to take a look at my situation and understand that I did have a choice, resulted in my daughters feeling that if it was good*

*enough for mom, it's good enough for me." [Source: Framing Survey]*

*Mandy...arrived at the door of My Friend's Place with her two small children, a four-year-old boy and an infant girl. Mandy had no teeth. Over time, her husband had punched her in the mouth repeatedly so all of her teeth had been knocked out. She also had hearing loss as a result of beatings...When Mandy called 911, the police arrived to find blood all over the house. They talked to Mandy and her husband separately. Mandy noticed one of the officers and her son walking around the house looking under the tables and around the couch, but she didn't know why. Later she asked her son about it. He said, "I asked the policeman what he was doing and he said he was looking for your teeth. I told him, I can help you. I can help you find Mommy's teeth." [Source: www.dirvc.org.au]*

*"Yes, my daughter's spouse is verbally, emotionally, and physically abusive. My mother was physically and verbally abusive toward her children. I was physically and verbally abusive toward my children for many years before learning different strategies." [Source: Framing Survey]*

Intimate Partner Violence occurs across all populations, regardless of social, economic, religious, or cultural group. Both men and women experience Intimate Partner Violence. Women are two to three times more likely to report pushing, grabbing, or shoving and seven to 14 times more likely to report beating, choking, or being tied down than men.

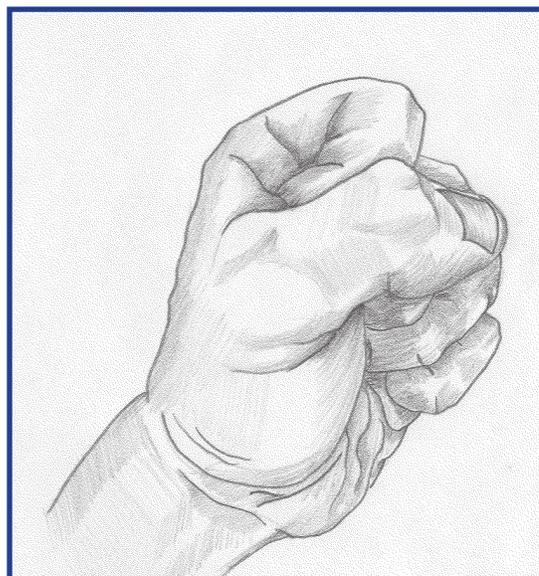
American Indian and Alaska Native women and men report more Intimate Partner Violence than other racial groups. An estimated 40 to 70 percent of female murder victims are killed by their husbands or boyfriends. Estimates indicate that battered women account

for 25 to 35 percent of women who seek care in emergency rooms, 25 percent of women who attempt suicide, 23 percent of women seeking prenatal care, 45 to 59 percent of mothers of abused children, and 58 percent of women over 30 years of age who have been raped.

There are several background factors associated with the incidence of Intimate Partner Violence. The incidence of Intimate Partner Violence is higher in communities that have higher rates of poverty, weak sanctions against violence, higher rates of unemployment, overcrowding, and lack of social organizations dealing with the problem.

Victims of intimate partner abuse are more likely than others to have a history of physical abuse and prior injury from the same person. They are also more likely to experience economic problems, be less than 25 years of age, been abused as a child, and have a partner with a history of alcohol and drug abuse.

The flipside of Intimate Partner Violence are those who commit violence. Both men and women are abusers, though a far greater number are men. Perpetrators and batterers generally share one or more attributes. Men have a tendency to be preoccupied with a "macho" image of humanity. Men feel a need to dominate and control women. Women who are batterers have these same tendencies.



Perpetrators characteristically lack good communication skills and alternatively behave passively or aggressively. They are more inclined than others to resolve problems and emotions through violence. They often suffer from poor impulse control and their emotions tend to be reduced to anger. This anger, in turn, is expressed primarily through violent behavior. They are more likely to be unemployed.

Perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence are more likely to be young and have low income, low self-esteem, and less schooling. They are more likely to have been involved in aggressive or delinquent behavior as a youth, use alcohol and/or drugs, and be unemployed. Growing up in an abusive household is also a risk factor. Like an alcoholic, batterers deny there is a problem, and refuse to accept responsibility for their abusive behavior.

Victim reluctance is a significant factor inhibiting prosecution of batterers. Victims have a variety of reasons for not pursuing the prosecution of their abusers. Victims often lack the financial resources to participate in the process. The challenge of finding child care facilities, paying for the child care, lack of transportation, and employers that will not grant them time away from work are high on the list of reasons. Victims are often concerned that the community may turn on them – especially in small rural places.

Victims often do not press charges and/or testify against the perpetrator for fear of experiencing even more instances of violence from the abuser. Victims also have a tendency to “forgive” the abuser. The penalty for committing Intimate Partner Violence is often not much more than mandated referral to counseling or classes – many of which are of short duration.

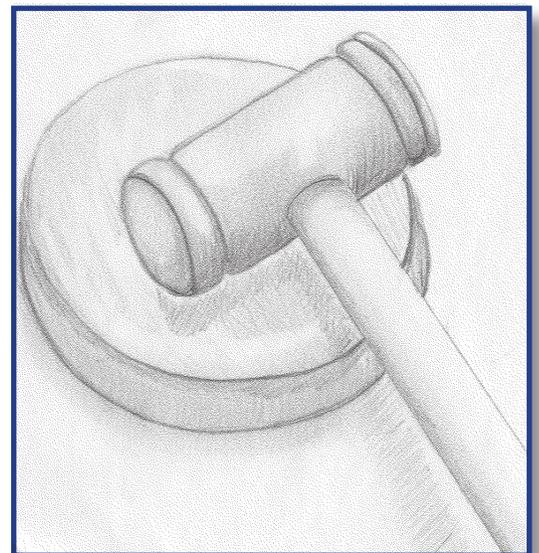
### **What’s Been Done About Intimate Partner Violence?**

Many approaches have been used in the prevention and treatment for the victims and perpetrators of Intimate

Partner Violence. There are examples of programs and projects to help victims and perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence all over the country. Many are at neighborhood and community levels. Most of the earlier efforts focused on “after the fact” actions that could be taken to help victims. Over time, educational programs have been created for victims, perpetrators, and the children living in violent households. Law enforcement, the court system, health providers, support groups, communities, and social services throughout the country are involved in efforts to reduce the incidence and the impact of Intimate Partner Violence. Proactive approaches to preventing and intervening are more common today than they were a decade ago.

There are innovative and effective programs. **CourtWatch** is currently offered in about 20 locations (mostly specific cities). The program monitors the courts as they try domestic violence cases to ensure victims are safe and perpetrators are held accountable. The monitors are trained volunteers. They use a nine-step guide put together by the National Council of Jewish Women in Louisville, KY. The monitors work with the personnel in the system rather than as advocates against the system.

The **Stosny Treatment Model** is a results-oriented treatment model implemented over a 12-week period. It is designed for perpetrators. The model



has been used successfully with men and women, and with court-ordered and voluntary participants. In the decade or more this program has been operating, the results are impressive. Of court-ordered male participants, 87 percent have successfully reduced and/or eliminated battering behaviors. Seventy-one percent of male batterers are free of verbally aggressive behaviors after a year as attested to by their spouses or girlfriends. The program has been used in more than 35 states/cities in the United States and other countries.

The prevention-based **Mississippi Model** focuses on preparing African-American sons for manhood. It is a male mentoring program that works through African-American churches and schools. The program is based on principles of love, respect, responsibility, guidance, and spirituality. It is also based on a time-honored tradition in the African-American community that embraces the idea that all children are the collective responsibility of the community. [Source of information on the above three examples is: [www.silentwitness.net](http://www.silentwitness.net)]

Many, but not all, people agree that more needs to be done. A complicating factor is the tendency for funds supporting such work to be limited and among the first to be cut at all levels of government. As a county sheriff in a rural county of about 10,000 people in Missouri said,

*"My department has five people to cover this county 24/7. We aren't able to assign responsibility for domestic violence to one officer. Many times, given the geographic size of the county, it is impossible to respond to domestic abuse calls. This county just does not have the money to add officers."*

How effective are the many efforts to intervene in Intimate Partner Violence? As recently as 2004, the Call for Proposals to address Intimate Partner Violence by the Center for Disease Control stated:

*"Although many service models and programs to address violence against women have been developed and implemented, the scope of those strategies and services has been limited. Often such programs exist in shelters, in the criminal justice system, and some programs do exist in non-traditional settings (e.g., workplace). Very few target the primary prevention of violence and most lack evidence of efficacy, effectiveness, or cost-effectiveness. In addition, the few that have been rigorously evaluated have shown limited impact. . . a broader range of intervention strategies must be developed and rigorously evaluated."*  
[Source: CDC Call for Proposals, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 93.136]

### **What Should We Do?**

It would be the extreme to find anyone advocating Intimate Partner Violence. It is not difficult, however, to find wide differences of opinion about what, if anything, should be done about it. Some feel strongly that intimate partners "made their own bed" and should resolve their own problems. People who feel this way are inclined to think that intervention by the community is unnecessary and unneeded. Other people feel just as strongly that the community should intervene to stop the abuse of one partner by the other, using whatever means are necessary.

The scale of Intimate Partner Violence, in terms of the number of people and the costs involved, begs for a national conversation to explore alternative approaches to the problem. There is a need to search for common ground among us regarding this issue. It is generally agreed that reductions in Intimate Partner Violence would reduce the number of victims and perpetrators in the next generation.

Three different approaches to the issue of Intimate Partner Violence are outlined here. There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach. There are trade-offs within each approach as

well as between the approaches. The approaches are designed to help people with diverse views on the issue come together to talk and think through what might be done to reduce the number of victims, perpetrators, and the human and monetary costs of Intimate Partner Violence.

**Approach One** says that if we would “make it easier to get help” for victims and perpetrators that the frequency of Intimate Partner Violence would be reduced. Emphasis is on ensuring that the organizations in place in every community are working together to provide the necessary assistance. The central value of this approach is the belief that both victims and perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence can and should be helped by the community.

**Approach Two** says that the effects of Intimate Partner Violence are severe. People are being killed and injured at alarming rates and the priority should

be “stop the bleeding now.” Emphasis is on aggressive enforcement of the law and severe and certain penalties for perpetrators and batterers. Ensuring the safety of the victims is also a major part of this approach. Those who advocate this approach feel very strongly that harsh and strict enforcement of penalties for committing intimate personal violence is part of the “solution;” lack of such is part of the “problem.”

**Approach Three** says that the real solution to Intimate Partner Violence is to find ways to “break the cycle” of Intimate Partner Violence, so children will be less likely to commit Intimate Partner Violence when they become adults. The approach focuses on changing the “master of the castle” mindset central in our society. Supporters of this approach want to use the entire arsenal of treatment, penalties, and education to change the very core of human response to power and control within intimate partnerships.

# Approach One:

## Make it Easier to get Help

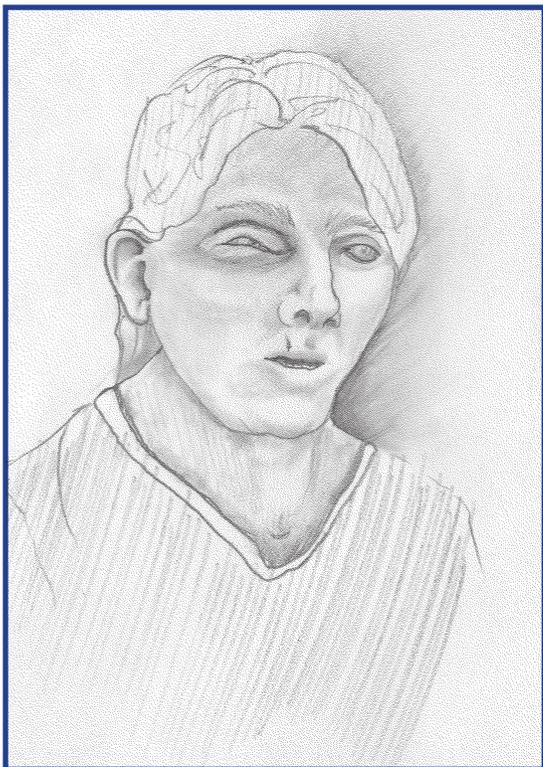
Intimate Partner Violence is almost never a *single, isolated event*. Repetition of violence by the perpetrator is very common – continuing until it is stopped through the intervention of community-based resources! So say those who believe that Intimate Partner Violence can only be dealt with through intervention of organizations and agencies. They say the scale of Intimate Partner Violence in communities calls for removing every barrier to stopping such violence. Efforts to *make it easier* for victims and potential victims – as well as the perpetrators – of Intimate Partner Violence to get help is critical at the community level.

Those advocating this approach believe community-wide involvement is key to dealing with Intimate Partner Violence, even though this approach is still not common. Community-wide means that everybody expected to assist in solving the problem of Intimate Partner Violence – law enforcement, the judicial system,

associations and community groups, and social and health workers – needs to understand the nature of the problem and be supportive of victims. Biases that today's victims and perpetrators experience cannot be allowed to interfere with prompt attention to calls for help. Turf battles between groups intended to help victims and perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence should not be tolerated by the community at large.

Victims of Intimate Partner Violence, as well as those who work with them, say it is still difficult for the victims of abuse to get help. "I didn't know where to go," is a common response when victims are asked to talk about the reasons they have not sought help or stayed with the abuser so long before seeking help. When victims do seek help, they often find officials and leaders of community organizations that are unsympathetic or inexperienced in dealing with abusive situations. Some communities do not have the resources – human, economic, or organizational – to be of much help. Some human service organizations are so specialized that they are incapable of dealing with the "whole problem" of victims of Intimate Partner Violence.

Perpetrators and batterers also have to be taken into account. They have a different view regarding resources to help them stop committing Intimate Partner Violence. They often feel that resources are primarily oriented to helping the victims. They feel that many of the "penalties" handed out do not help them change their behavior. As an example, batterers are often sent to "anger management" sessions. Batterers generally do not feel that anger management seminars help them change their basic tendency to abuse partners. Many Intimate Partner Violence experts agree that anger management is not an effective alternative for treating batterers. [Source: [www.edvp.org](http://www.edvp.org)]



Every community does not have the same set of organizations available to deal with Intimate Partner Violence. Victims and perpetrators often have difficulty accessing and using available services. Coupled with this are the barriers to cooperation and coordination that often exists among agencies and organizations at the community level.

## What Can be Done?

To make it easier for victims of Intimate Partner Violence, as well as the batterers, to get the quality of help that is needed, actions could be taken to:

- Combine separate groups in counties and cities, such as Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence, and Child Abuse organizations, to make it easier to work with all the household individuals involved in cases of Intimate Partner Violence.
- Implement a widespread system of court-appointed advocates to inform and assist victims and perpetrators.
- Develop funding sources for local (county, city) intervention, treatment, and prevention programs.
- Create Intimate Partner Violence Councils among existing services and programs for victims and perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence.
- Provide special training and education about Intimate Partner Violence for those who interact with victims and perpetrators. Training should be based on the growing body of knowledge from successful programs and practices.
- Involve victims and perpetrators in evaluating and planning services and programs intended for their benefit.
- Create options for providing safe sanctuary for victims of Intimate Partner Violence.

Those who support this approach believe that victims and perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence can and should be helped by the community. Supporters of this approach argue that

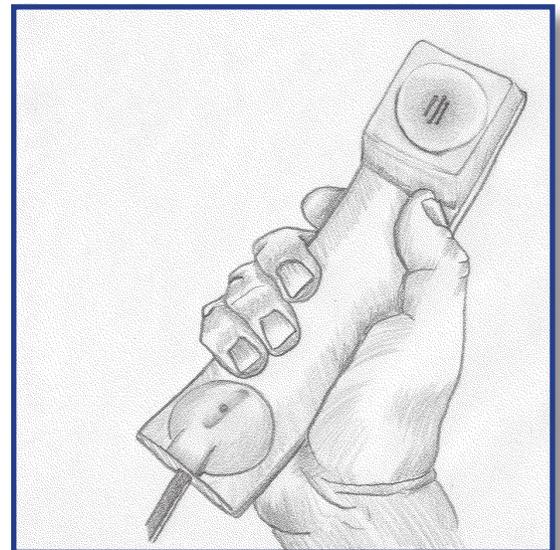
increased access by victims and better cooperation among service providers is a critical need. They also believe that better training of those who have responsibilities to work with the victims and perpetrators and more awareness and education by the broader public on the problem of Intimate Partner Violence will help solve the problem of Intimate Partner Violence. Supporters believe that actions such as those outlined above would lead to a reduction in Intimate Partner Violence and improvements in assistance available to victims and perpetrators.

Some supporters would argue that better community cooperation would increase the likelihood that victims and perpetrators will be able to find needed sanctuary and get the assistance, mentoring, and education needed.

Other supporters would argue that current practices by some existing groups help create a stigma for victims and perpetrators and need to be changed. Others would argue that we are spending enough on this issue – we just need to become more effective and “user friendly.”

### Concerns about this Approach

Family traditionalists would be critical of this approach because of opposition to any approach that might lead to separation or dissolution of the family unit. They take the view that the family structure



should be maintained at virtually all costs. Many would also argue that the public has already spent more than enough on this problem, and that it's not the public's business anyhow. Some critics of making it easier for victims to get help would argue that Intimate Partner Violence is the fault of the victim and the perpetrator and should be solved within the relationship.

Other critics would express the view that more cooperation and coordination among existing community organizations and agencies "just won't cut it." People who hold this view say that it will take many more resources than we are allocating to solve the problem and that major attention needs to be given to finding other ways to reduce the incidence of Intimate Partner Violence. Critics of this approach to reducing Intimate Partner Violence also argue that victims simply do not contact agencies, organizations, or resources and do not use available help.

### **Trade-offs in this Approach**

This approach could shift the emphasis from the victims and perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence to the people and organizations intended to help them. Focusing on making things easier for victims to get help could detract from efforts to reduce the basic causes and impacts of Intimate Partner Violence. Privacy concerns of victims, perpetrators, and the larger society could create a trade-off between privacy and making it easier to provide timely help to victims of Intimate Partner Violence. There is real potential for tension between those in the community that believe victims and perpetrators can and should be helped and those who believe strongly in the sanctity of a family unit where the male is expected to be the dominant partner.

# Approach Two: Stop the Bleeding

Victims of Intimate Partner Violence are being repeatedly beaten and even killed. More women are murdered by their intimate partner than any other single type of assailant. Children in these situations are at great risk. People are dying or being seriously injured and we need to **“stop the bleeding now.”** The costs of failing to deal with the problem are borne by victims, perpetrators and society in general, and impact millions of people every year. Those costs – economic, emotional, and physical – are great. Supporters of this approach are looking for actions that will stop the violence. This approach sees the need to make the punishment of perpetrators “fit the crime,” and the time is now.

Why has this problem been allowed to continue? Why haven't we been more aggressive in prosecuting perpetrators? In some states, penalties are greater for cruelty to animals than for abusing and battering one's intimate partner. Why haven't we given more attention to protecting the victims? The problem is complex and the reasons vary. Among them :

- Victim reluctance to press charges and testify.
- Resources available for aggressive prosecution of perpetrators vary widely from one jurisdiction to another.
- Laws regarding Intimate Partner Violence vary widely from state to state. The interpretation of existing statutes also varies from one jurisdiction to another.
- Males still dominate law enforcement and judicial systems, setting up the potential for age-old biases about roles and expectations between men and women.
- Education and training about Intimate Partner Violence is very uneven across the country. Many who become



involved with such cases have limited background and expertise regarding this type of violence.

## What Can be Done?

Commitment to “stopping the bleeding” would require quicker responses to Intimate Partner Violence cases and more severe penalties and enforcement of those penalties. Intimate Partner Violence is not a class of criminal action that should permit “three strikes and you're out.” Due process should prevail, but not undue delay. Possible actions that could help “stop the bleeding:”

- Provide safe living arrangements in all communities for victims while the legal system deals with the perpetrator.
- Enact or amend laws in all states to make it easier for law enforcement to take action against the perpetrator. Some states already permit law enforcement to proceed with prosecution whether the victim wishes to press charges or not. Steps to make this a more common practice within and across state lines, rather than an exception, could be helpful.
- Work with the law enforcement, the judicial system, and social service agencies to increase the severity of the penalties handed out to perpetrators. Make penalties for Intimate Partner Violence comparable to the penalties for sexual predators.

- Step up the enforcement of existing laws, such as protective orders. Make penalties for violation more serious.
- Broaden the range of rehabilitation options available to the courts.
- Provide increased support for approaches demonstrated to be most effective in dealing with Intimate Partner Violence.
- Require medical professionals to report instances of Intimate Partner Violence to law enforcement officials. Only California currently has such a law.

Supporters of this approach would say that we have to act now, get tough on the perpetrators, and intervene more often and more forcefully. Failure to do so leads to unacceptable consequences for the victims, perpetrators, and society in general. Supporters would say we cannot wait to change the culture or fix the communication and coordination problems among service providers. Some would support this approach because it is consistent with other “get tough” measures that have been put in place for other crimes.

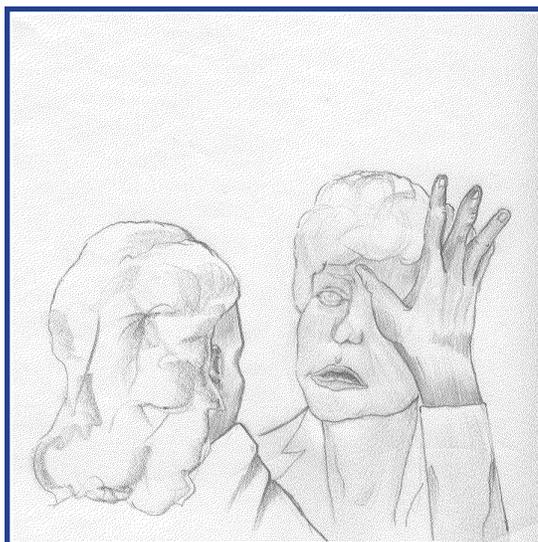
### **Concerns with this Approach**

Critics of this approach would argue that “getting tough” may do nothing to decrease the incidence of Intimate Partner Violence and largely assumes that the problem is within the law enforcement and justice system. Some critics would also note that this approach does not focus on the basic causes of Intimate Partner Violence. Still others would argue that

these problems are to be settled between the adults involved – and that we already have far too many laws about what individuals can and cannot do in private. Finally, some would express the view that this approach leans too far toward the concerns of the victim.

### **Trade-offs of this Approach**

Increased authority and discretion by law enforcement could reduce personal rights and freedom for both victims and perpetrators. Organizations and agencies that come in contact with victims could become too aggressive and report suspected Intimate Partner Violence when it has not occurred, or if it has, violence that may have been initiated jointly or by the other party. Directing major resources to “stopping the bleeding now” may reduce the possibility of increased support for seeking fundamental and long-term ways to reduce the amount of Intimate Partner Violence.



# Approach Three: Break the Cycle

There is considerable evidence to suggest that “violence begets violence.” In New Jersey, 81 percent of men who batter had fathers who abused their mothers. In Massachusetts, children who grow up in violent homes have a 74 percent higher likelihood of committing criminal assaults against their partner. Growing up in a home where Intimate Partner Violence was common is a strong indicator that the person will also be involved in such violence when reaching adulthood.

The “break the cycle” approach argues that making meaningful progress in reducing Intimate Partner Violence, and future violence by children growing up in homes where such violence occurs, will require nothing less than a change in our basic cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors related to violence. This approach will require much greater

attention to the causes of violence in general and to the causes of Intimate Partner Violence in particular.

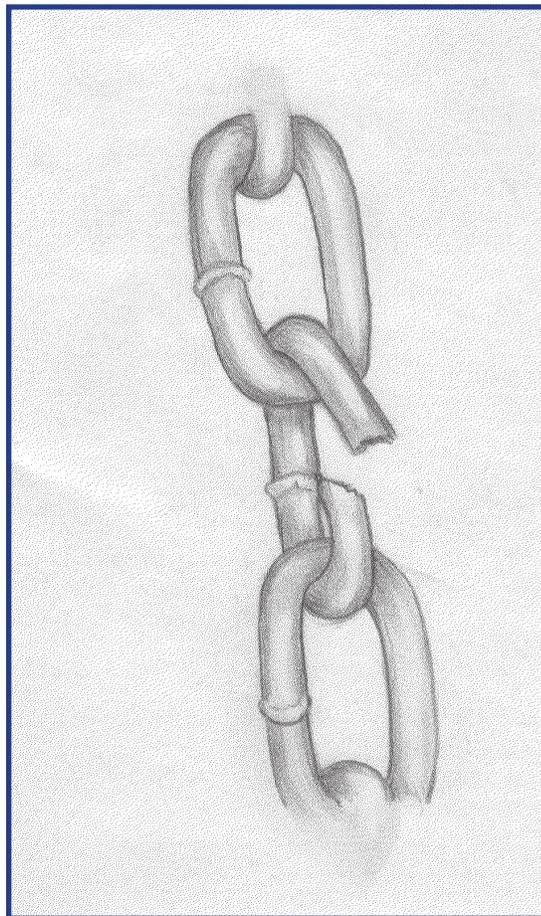
In our society, we have a strong tradition of **fixing** problems rather than **preventing** them from happening in the first place. The majority of programs related to Intimate Partner Violence emphasize “fixing” the perpetrators and the victims after the fact, rather than prevention of violence. Breaking the cycle of violence will require much more emphasis on prevention. Stopping Intimate Partner Violence from re-occurring after the fact will still be a necessary part of the job.

## What Can be Done?

Intimate Partner Violence is a subculture of its own. It is rooted in long standing patterns of violence within the larger society. The “master of the castle” behavior of many male batterers is deeply rooted in the many command and control structures in our society. Some subcultures of our society emphasize subservience of women in the family. Actions supporting this approach would focus on finding ways to change the “culture” of Intimate Partner Violence.

## Some possible actions:

- Strengthen curricula in K-12 schools, by including much more education about alternative ways to resolve conflict and disagreements among people in general, and within families in particular. Create modules about Intimate Partner Violence in all of the subjects and activities in the K-12 system.
- Engage victims and reformed abusers as spokespersons in programs designed to inform and educate others about costs of Intimate Partner Violence.
- Beef up parent education programs by adding components on dealing



with conflict and Intimate Partner Violence.

- As individuals, stop purchasing products that depict violence as the way to solve problems. Impact the market by making individual economic choices that “punish” producers of materials depicting Intimate Partner Violence.

Supporters would argue that violence has always been a part of our culture, and until we find ways to overcome that characteristic of our humanness, we will not be able to reduce Intimate Partner Violence. Others favoring this approach would argue that actions to break the cycle of Intimate Partner Violence should be more proactive and less reactive than our current approaches to the problem. They would also argue that such an approach is the only thing that will really change the future trends and frequency of such violence. Supporters are betting there is truth in the old adage, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

### **Concerns about this Approach**

Critics of the approach would say that violent behaviors are embedded in our

culture and cannot be changed. Moreover, who among this diverse society has the right to “force” change in behaviors between intimate partners. Critics would say we have had very little past success “legislating” values. They would also say “breaking the cycle” would be enormously expensive. Many would see it as a cost, not an investment. Critics believe that we already have enough laws and support mechanisms for victims of Intimate Partner Violence.

### **Trade-offs in this Approach**

The monetary costs of such an extensive and intensive approach could require reduction or elimination of other programs and projects. Requiring a substantial increase in the amount of time schools devoted to education about Intimate Partner Violence would require considerable adjustment of the existing curricula – a move likely to be resisted by those concerned with our falling behind in our nation’s scientific proficiency. Finally, a core trade-off would be between intervening in people’s intimate lives and the long-standing belief that what happens in the intimacy of the home is nobody else’s business.

# Conclusion

## Comparing the Approaches

Intimate Partner Violence occurs in hundreds of thousands of homes each year. This results in millions of physical injuries and emotional damage to the direct participants in the violence as well as the countless numbers of children involved. The violence between the adults in children's lives sets the stage for similar behavior as they grow into adults.

Considering the emotional toll of Intimate Partner Violence and the economic cost, estimated at nearly \$6 *billion* dollars a year, it seems more than appropriate that citizens should give careful consideration to what might be done to reduce the amount of such violence in our society.

Three approaches are outlined. Each assumes a different set of reasons underlying Intimate Partner Violence and suggests different actions that might be taken to reduce its impact. The views of those who support each approach and those who would oppose or criticize each approach are also outlined. Key trade-offs are also identified.

The deliberation that occurs in a forum setting will draw out many more concerns, possible actions, and trade-offs – and this is as it should be.

### **APPROACH ONE: Make It Easier to Get Help**

Intimate Partner Violence is almost never a single, isolated event. Repetition by the perpetrator is common—continuing until it is stopped through the intervention of community-based services. The problem is the availability of such services, lack of coordination and cooperation among such services, and the lack of awareness and knowledge that services are available by the victims and perpetrators. Victims are often afraid to seek help and some who work for agencies and organizations are inadequately prepared to be of assistance.

### **What Can be Done?**

- Implement a widespread system of court appointed advocates.
- Develop funding sources for local services.
- Create Intimate Partner Violence Councils at the local level.
- Provide special training and education.
- Involve victims and perpetrators in evaluation of programs and services
- Combine separate groups in communities and counties – especially in rural areas.

### **What the Critics Say**

- We are already spending more than enough on this problem.
- Intimate Partner Violence is mainly the fault of the victim and perpetrator.
- Coordination and cooperation just “won't cut it.”
- Victims do not use such services anyway.

### **A Likely Trade-off**

This approach would likely shift the emphasis from the victims and perpetrators to the people and organizations that are intended to help them. Focusing on them could detract from dealing with the basic causes of Intimate Partner Violence.

### **APPROACH TWO: Stop the Bleeding**

Victims of Intimate Partner Violence are being repeatedly beaten – even killed. Children are at great risk. We need to “stop the bleeding now.” The costs of failing to deal with the problem is borne by victims, perpetrators, and society at large. It impacts millions of people every year. This approach sees the need to make the punishment of perpetrators “fit the crime” and the time is now.

## **What Can Be Done?**

- Provide safe living arrangements for the victims while the legal system deals with the perpetrators.
- Strengthen the laws dealing with Intimate Partner Violence.
- Increase the severity of penalties for Intimate Partner Violence.
- Step up enforcement of current laws, such as the protective orders.
- Broaden the range of rehabilitative options available to the courts.
- Provide increased support for effective violence-reducing programs.
- Require medical professionals to report Intimate Partner Violence.

## **What Critics Say**

Critics would argue that “getting tough” may do nothing to decrease the incidence of Intimate Partner Violence. This approach assumes that the problem is within the law enforcement and justice system. Others would argue that this does not focus on the causes of Intimate Partner Violence – and we already have too many laws about what individuals can and cannot do in private. Some would argue that this approach leans too far toward the concerns of the victim.

## **A Likely Trade-off**

Increased authority and discretion by law enforcement could reduce personal rights and freedom for both victims and perpetrators. Directing additional resources to law enforcement and the justice system could reduce the support for seeking fundamental and long-term ways of reducing Intimate Partner Violence.

## **APPROACH THREE:**

### **Break the Cycle**

There is considerable evidence to suggest that “violence begets violence.” Batterers and perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence are more likely to have grown up in households where one or more of the adults was a batterer. The practice

of violence to solve problems between people is everywhere in our society. We see it daily in households, in the streets, in television, and movies, video games, and music. How do we break the cycle of such violence and find other ways to relate to each other?

## **What Can Be Done?**

- Include much more education about ways to resolve conflict and disagreement in our K-12 schools.
- Stop purchasing products that depict violence as the way to solve problems – “punish” the producers of such materials.
- Develop community-wide approaches to reducing Intimate Partner Violence.
- Beef up parent education programs by adding components on dealing with conflict and Intimate Partner Violence.

## **What Critics Say**

- Violent behavior is embedded in our culture and cannot be changed.
- Who among our diverse society has the right to “force” change in behaviors between intimate partners?
- We have had very little success in legislating values. Why would this be any different?
- Breaking the cycle would be enormously expensive and detract from other major needs – such as jobs – that relate to Intimate Partner Violence.

## **A Likely Trade-off**

The monetary costs of “breaking the cycle” of Intimate Partner Violence would be so large that it would require the reduction or elimination of other important programs and projects. Intervening in people’s intimate lives directly challenges the long-standing belief that what happens in the intimacy of the home is nobody else’s business.



# POST QUESTIONNAIRE

## Intimate Partner Violence: What Can We Do? \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have had a chance to participate in a forum on this issue, we would like to know what you are thinking. Your opinions, along with thousands of others who participate in other forums on this issue, will be reflected in a summary report that will be available to all citizens, including those who took part in the forums, as well as officeholders, members of the news media, and others in your community.

<b>1. Do you agree or disagree with the statements below?</b>	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
a. Intimate Partner Violence is a major problem in this community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. The current services and programs concerned with Intimate Partner Violence are sufficient to meet the need.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. Trying to break the cycle of violence is a nice idea, but it really will not work.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. The current laws regarding Intimate Partner Violence are sufficient to deal with the problem.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. There should be uniformity in laws about Intimate Partner Violence across all states.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>2. Do you favor or oppose each of these actions?</b>	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Not Sure
a. Combining separate groups and programs working on Intimate Partner Violence at county and/or community levels.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. Using tax dollars to support Intimate Partner Violence programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. Increasing the severity of penalties for those who commit Intimate Partner Violence.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. Expanding the curriculum in K-12 to include more about ways to resolve conflict and avoid violence.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. Boycotting or punishing companies that produce video games and materials depicting personal violence.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f. Requiring all law enforcement agencies to have trained personnel to deal with Intimate Partner Violence.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>3. Do you favor or oppose the statements listed below?</b>	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Not Sure
a. All judges who deal with Intimate Partner Violence cases should be required to have special training about Intimate Partner Violence.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. Penalties for Intimate Partner Violence should have the same "three strikes, you're out" as is the case for drugs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

- c. There is so much room for error in assigning blame in Intimate Partner Violence cases that most cases never end up in court.
- d. There is very little chance that we can "break the cycle" of Intimate Partner Violence in this society.

**4. Are you thinking differently about this issue now that you have participated in the forum?**

Yes  No

If yes, how?

**5. In your forum, did you talk about aspects of the issue you had not considered before?**

Yes  No

**6. What, if anything, might citizens in your community do differently as a result of this forum?**

**7. How many National Issue Forums have you attended, including this one?**

1 to 3  4 to 6  7 or more  Not sure

**8. Are you male or female?**

Male  Female

**9. How old are you?**

17 or younger  18 to 30  31 to 45  46 to 64  65 or older

**10. Are you:**

African American  Asian American  Hispanic  Native American  White/Caucasian

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Where do you live?**

Rural  Small town  Large city  Suburbs

**12. What is your ZIP Code?** \_\_\_\_\_

Please give form to the forum leader, or mail it to: Sue Williams, 233 HES, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078.