



# Family Violence: Core Concepts for Newcomer-Serving Organizations

July 16, 2025  
Additional Q&A

This document was developed in response to thoughtful questions submitted during the public webinar [Family Violence: Core Concepts for Newcomer-Serving Organizations](#) hosted on July 16, 2025. While we were not able to answer all the questions live, we hope the responses below provide helpful guidance and clarity as you support clients who may be experiencing a form of family violence. Please note that answers are intended for general informational purposes and may need to be adapted based on your role, your local laws, and your organization's protocols.

These questions reflect the thoughtfulness and dedication of providers working in the field. Please continue seeking support, engaging in consultation, and using trauma-informed, survivor-centered approaches as you navigate these complex and meaningful conversations with clients.

## **How long does it usually take for warning signs of intimate partner violence to appear?**

There's no set timeline for when warning signs might show up in a relationship. Abuse can begin early or emerge over time. If you suspect a client may be experiencing violence, a gentle and open-ended question like "Are there times when you feel safe at home and times when you don't? Can you describe them?" can invite disclosure. It's important not to pressure the survivor. Offer support and space for the survivor to share when they are ready.

## **Where can I find resources to support my clients experiencing family or intimate partner violence?**

We encourage you to explore [Settle In](#) and the [Migration Health Initiative \(MHI\)](#). Both platforms offer client-facing resources in multiple languages. The [Settle In Help Center](#) is also a useful tool for additional information and support.

## **What if I observe verbal or physical abuse during a home visit, but the client hasn't disclosed the abuse or asked for help?**

That's a really important and thoughtful question. This is actually a common situation many providers encounter during home visits. Even if a client has not disclosed abuse or asked for help, your observations still matter and can open the door for future support.

One helpful approach is to gently share general information about domestic violence (DV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) and available resources. This way, you are planting a seed so when the client is ready, they know where to turn. It is also okay to reflect what you've noticed in a private, nonjudgmental way. For example, you might say:

“At our last home visit, I noticed your partner called you names, and you seemed really quiet afterwards, and that concerned me. Would you like to talk about it with me or someone else?”

It’s also important to know your mandatory reporting laws—especially when children are involved. If you are required to report, include cultural and linguistic considerations, and advocate for the family’s dignity throughout the process. Additionally, it’s also important to educate clients about the rules and laws around mandatory reporting, so they understand what must be reported and why, helping to build transparency and trust.

### **How can we support clients who want to report abuse, knowing they may not get the protection or support they need from the systems in place?**

Supporting survivors includes helping them make informed decisions. If a client wants to pursue legal action, connect them to legal professionals (e.g., family law or immigration law professionals) who can explain the process, risks, and benefits. Be honest about all possible outcomes while affirming their right to choose what’s best for them.

### **What can I do if I notice a child mistreating a parent who doesn’t speak English?**

Power imbalances can develop when children become cultural and language brokers. If children are using their language skills to control or manipulate parents, this could be a sign of unhealthy family dynamics. A child mistreating their parents is not considered violence in this context.

However, the family should be offered support through parenting or family interventions that promote mutual respect and communication.

### **What’s a good first question to ask someone I suspect may be experiencing abuse?**

Rather than jumping into problem-solving, focus on being present and offering supportive statements. Depending on the situation, start with simple, grounding questions like:

“What feels most important for us to talk about today?” or

“Do you feel safe returning home and being at home after our meeting?”

### **How can I provide support if a survivor is still living with the person who is harming them?**

This requires thoughtful, safety-centered service delivery. Steps can include:

- Developing a safety plan together
- Offering warm referrals to DV- or IPV-specialized services
- Splitting case assignments (e.g., one staff person does not serve both the survivor and the abusive family member)
- Encouraging engagement in community supports to reduce isolation
- Always communicating any actions with the survivor to avoid increasing their risk

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### **What are some signs that violence may be occurring in the home?**

Possible indicators include:

- Frequent, unexplained absences from services or work
- Visible injuries or signs of stress
- Avoidant or tense body language around a partner or family member
- Deferring to a partner or other family member for all communication and decisions

These signs are not always proof of abuse, as behaviors can be influenced by cultural norms, relationship dynamics, or communication styles. However, they can be important cues for further exploration in a safe, respectful, and trauma-informed way—without making assumptions.

### **How can we advocate for survivors of family violence?**

Advocacy happens *with* and *for* survivors. Partner with them to get services that honor their culture, language, and unique needs. You can also advocate within systems—such as schools, health care, and legal settings—to ensure policies and practices are supportive and accessible to immigrant and refugee survivors.

### **How does abuse show up in older refugee or immigrant adults?**

Older adults can experience physical, emotional, or financial abuse, especially if they rely on others for care. Elder abuse might look like neglecting medical needs, verbal mistreatment, or financial exploitation. In most states, **Adult Protective Services (APS)** is the point of contact for reporting concerns involving elder abuse or neglect. Know your mandatory reporting laws. Some helpful resources include the Switchboard archived webinar [Foundations of Mandatory Reporting for Refugee Service Providers](#) and the information guide [Fundamentals of Mandatory Reporting: A Guide for Refugee Service Providers in the U.S.](#) If you are required to report, include cultural and linguistic considerations, and advocate for the family's dignity throughout the process.

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Thank you for your continued commitment to serving and supporting survivors of family violence. If you're looking for additional resources or support, be sure to explore the tools mentioned above, or visit [www.SwitchboardTA.org](http://www.SwitchboardTA.org) for training, tools, case consultation, and technical assistance.

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