

Understanding Intimate Partner Violence: COVID-19 Implications

Jessica King, M.Ed., LPCC, Therapist

Ashley Kline, M.Ed., LPCC-S, Clinical Services Supervisor

Hope and Healing Survivor Resource Center

Battered Women's Shelter & Rape Crisis Center of Summit and Medina Counties

Objectives

- Understand basic components of IPV as well as an understanding of different abuse tactics
- Understand and apply information about invisible injuries and the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of IPV on survivors.
- Identify and understand IPV issues that have been amplified due to the COVID-19 pandemic and how to best support families through this.
- Apply a trauma informed perspective when working with survivors

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

- “IPV refers to the behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors (World Health Organization).”
- IPV is often used interchangeably with the term ‘domestic violence.’
- IPV does not discriminate and can happen within all types of relationships and within families

What makes an 'Intimate Partner?'

- “An intimate partner is a person with whom one has a close personal relationship that may be characterized by the partners’ emotional connectedness, regular contact, ongoing physical contact and sexual behavior, identity as a couple, and familiarity and knowledge about each other’s lives. The relationship need not involve all of these dimensions (cdc.gov).”
 - Spouses
 - Boyfriends/girlfriends/partners
 - Dating partners
 - Sexual partners

Intimate Partner Violence

- IPV is common, it affects millions of people per year
- About 1 in 4 women and nearly 1 in 10 men have experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime and reported some form of IPV-related impact.
- Over 43 million women and 38 million men experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime.
- About 11 million women and 5 million men who reported experiencing any form of IPV in their lifetime stated that they first experienced these forms before they were 18.



Individual Risk Factors for IPV

- Low self-esteem
- Low income
- Low academic achievement/low verbal IQ
- Young age
- Aggressive or delinquent behavior as a youth
- Heavy alcohol and drug use
- Depression and suicide attempts
- Anger and hostility
- Lack of non-violent social problem-solving skills
- Antisocial personality traits and conduct problems
- Poor behavioral control/impulsiveness
- Borderline personality traits
- Prior history of being physically abusive
- Having few friends and being isolated from other people
- Unemployment
- Emotional dependence and insecurity
- Belief in strict gender roles (e.g., male dominance and aggression in relationships)
- Desire for power and control in relationships
- Hostility towards women
- Attitudes accepting or justifying IPV
- Being a victim of physical or psychological abuse (consistently one of the strongest predictors of perpetration)
- Witnessing IPV between parents as a child
- History of experiencing poor parenting as a child
- History of experiencing physical discipline as a child
- Unplanned pregnancy

Community and Societal Risk Factors for IPV

- Poverty and associated factors (e.g., overcrowding, high unemployment rates)
- Low social capital-lack of institutions, relationships, and norms that shape a community's social interactions
- Poor neighborhood support and cohesion
- Weak community sanctions against IPV (e.g., unwillingness of neighbors to intervene in situations where they witness violence)
- High alcohol outlet density
- Traditional gender norms and gender inequality (e.g., women should stay at home, not enter workforce, and be submissive; men support the family and make the decisions)
- Cultural norms that support aggression toward others
- Societal income inequality
- Weak health, educational, economic, and social policies/laws

Abuse Tactics

- Coercion and threats
- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Intimidation
- Emotional abuse
- Isolation
- Minimizing, denying, blaming
- Using Children
- Economic abuse
- Male privilege
- Gas lighting
- Monopolization of perceptions
- Intimidation
- Induced debilitation/exhaustion
- Degradation
- Enforcing trivial demands

Power and Control Wheel



Psychological Aggression

- Expressive aggression
- Coercive control
- Threat of physical or sexual violence
- Control of reproductive health
- Exploitation of victims vulnerability
- Exploitation of abusers vulnerability
- Gas lighting

CDC.gov

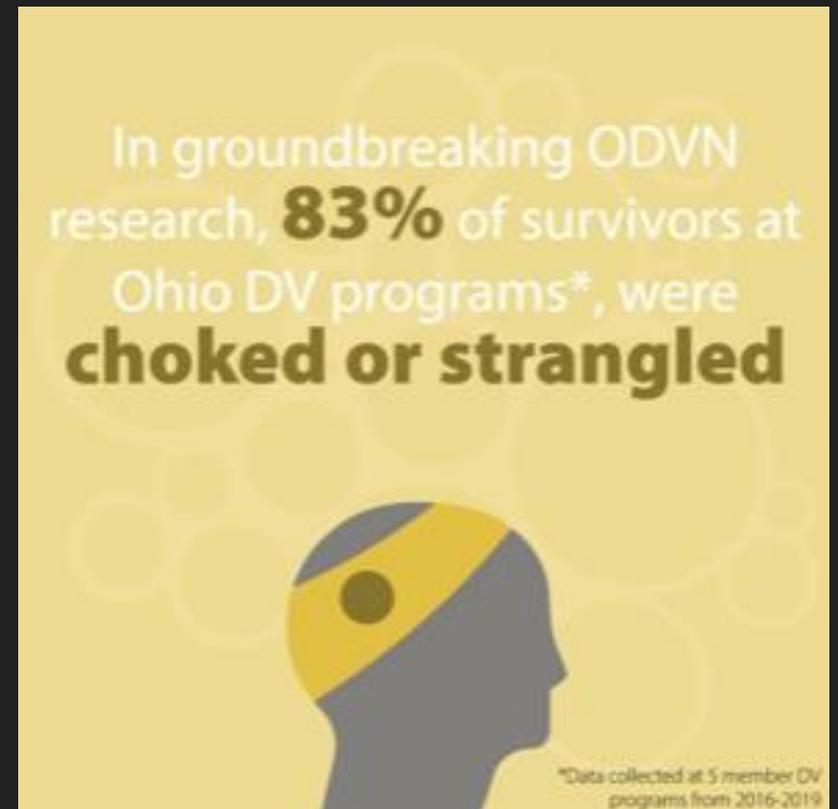
Gas Lighting

- Gas lighting is an insidious form of manipulation and psychological control. Victims of gas lighting are deliberately and systematically fed false information that leads them to question what they know to be true, often about themselves. They may end up doubting their memory their perception, and even their sanity. Over time, a gas lighter's manipulations can grow more complex and potent, making it increasingly difficult for the victim to see the truth (psychology today)."
 - They tell blatant lies
 - They deny you ever said anything, even though you have proof
 - They use what is near and dear to you as ammunition
 - They wear you down over time
 - Their actions do not match their words
 - They throw in positive reinforcement to confuse you
 - They know confusion weakens people
 - They project
 - They try to align people against you
 - They tell you or others that you are 'crazy'
 - They tell you everyone else is a liar

Sarkis, S. (2017).

Head Injury/Strangulation

- These are both common forms of 'invisible' physical abuse
- It is important to discuss this with clients when possible
- There can be long-term cognitive issues
- There can be damage without physical signs



Head injury signs/symptoms

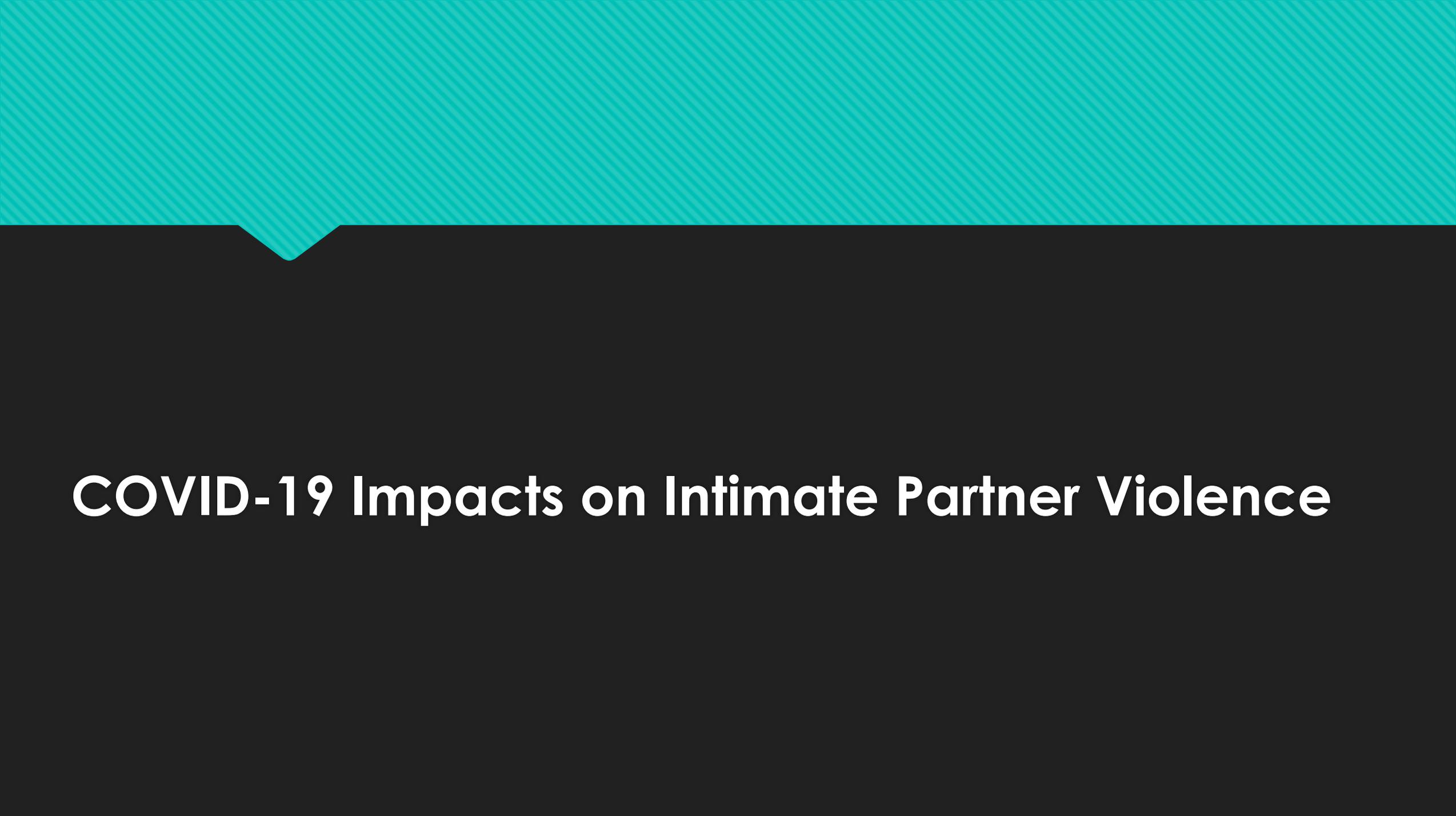
- Headache does not go away or gets worse
- One pupil larger than the other
- No memory of what happened
- Extreme drowsiness or difficulty waking up
- Slurred speech or vision problems, numbness, decrease in coordination
- Repeated nausea, vomiting, or shaking
- Unusual behavior or confusion
- Unintentionally urinating or pooping
- Stay with someone safe for 24-48 hours, contact your doctor to notify them

Strangulation signs/symptoms

- Strangulation is a head injury that hurts your brain
- Even if you have no marks, if people don't know, or if you did not pass out, it is still dangerous
- It can often result in long-term or permanent damage to the brain due to lack of oxygen
- If victims are strangled by their partner, they are 7 times more likely to be murdered
- Signs include:
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Painful breathing
 - Trouble swallowing
 - Voice changes
 - Problems speaking

Summary: IPV

- “IPV refers to the behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors (World Health Organization).”
- IPV involves a variety of abuse tactics, as well as power and control dynamics
- IPV is common and affects millions of people each year



COVID-19 Impacts on Intimate Partner Violence

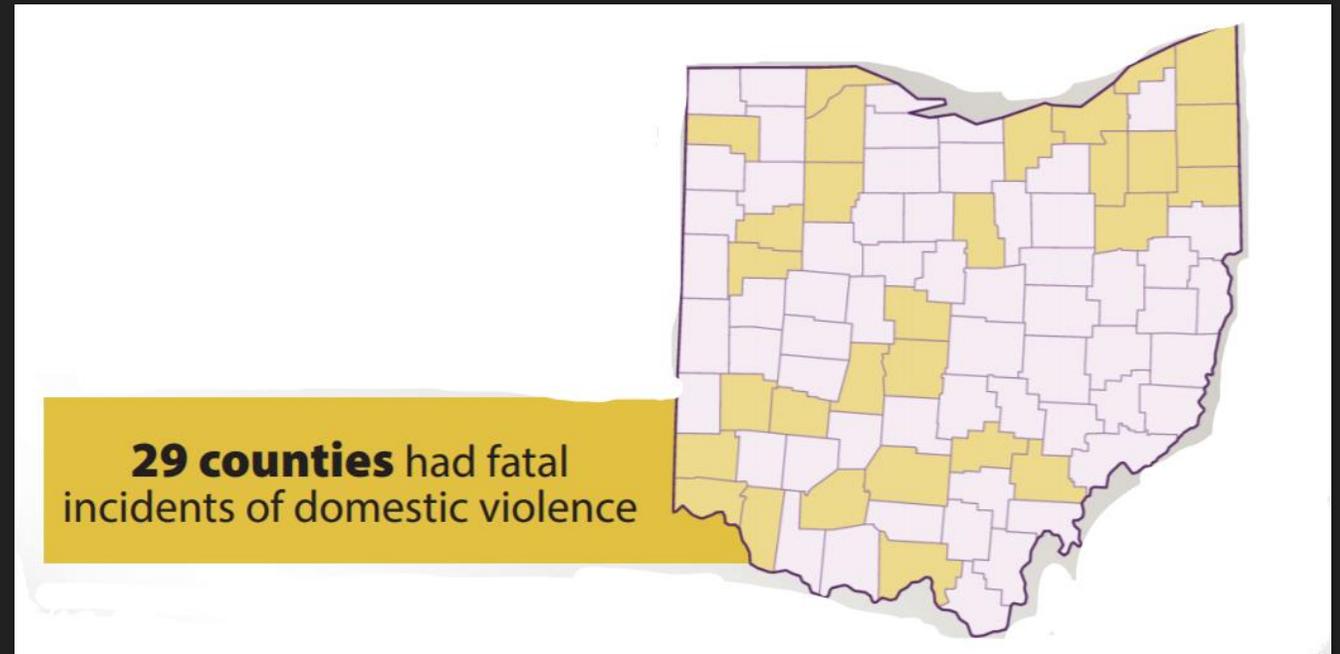
A Pandemic within the Pandemic

- Initially, decrease in calls to DV Programs – anywhere from 35-65%
- Increase in calls as restrictions lifted
- DV incidents rose 8.1% nationwide – “a floor, not a ceiling” (CNN)
- More than 50% of Ohio DV programs reported increases in crisis calls and need for emergency shelter as restrictions eased (ODVN)
- Multiple OH programs reported 3x the amount of clients requesting services (ODVN)
- 58% of DV programs report an increase in severity of violence & injuries reported, as well as an “alarming” increase in strangulation incidents (ODVN)
- In Boston, one hospital reported radiology scans and superficial wounds consistent with DV from March 11 to May 3 2020 exceeded the totals for the same period in 2018 and 2019 combined (TIME).
- 1 in 3 white women reported DV during the pandemic
 - The rate increased to 50% and higher among survivors marginalized by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship status & cognitive and physical abilities (TIME)

In 2020, **58% of Ohio's Domestic Violence programs** noted an **increase in the severity of violence and injuries reported**, including an alarming **increase in strangulation.**

A Pandemic within the Pandemic

- **35% increase in DV related fatalities**
- 109 fatalities in 77 cases (71 deceased victims & 38 deceased perpetrators)
 - 4 child victims
- In 22 cases, there was both a homicide & a suicide
- In at least 27% of fatality cases, the victim of IPV had ended the relationship or was in the process of leaving
- In at least 70% of fatalities, the victims were killed by guns



From July 2019-June 2020 (ODVN)

Factors Influencing IPV during COVID-19

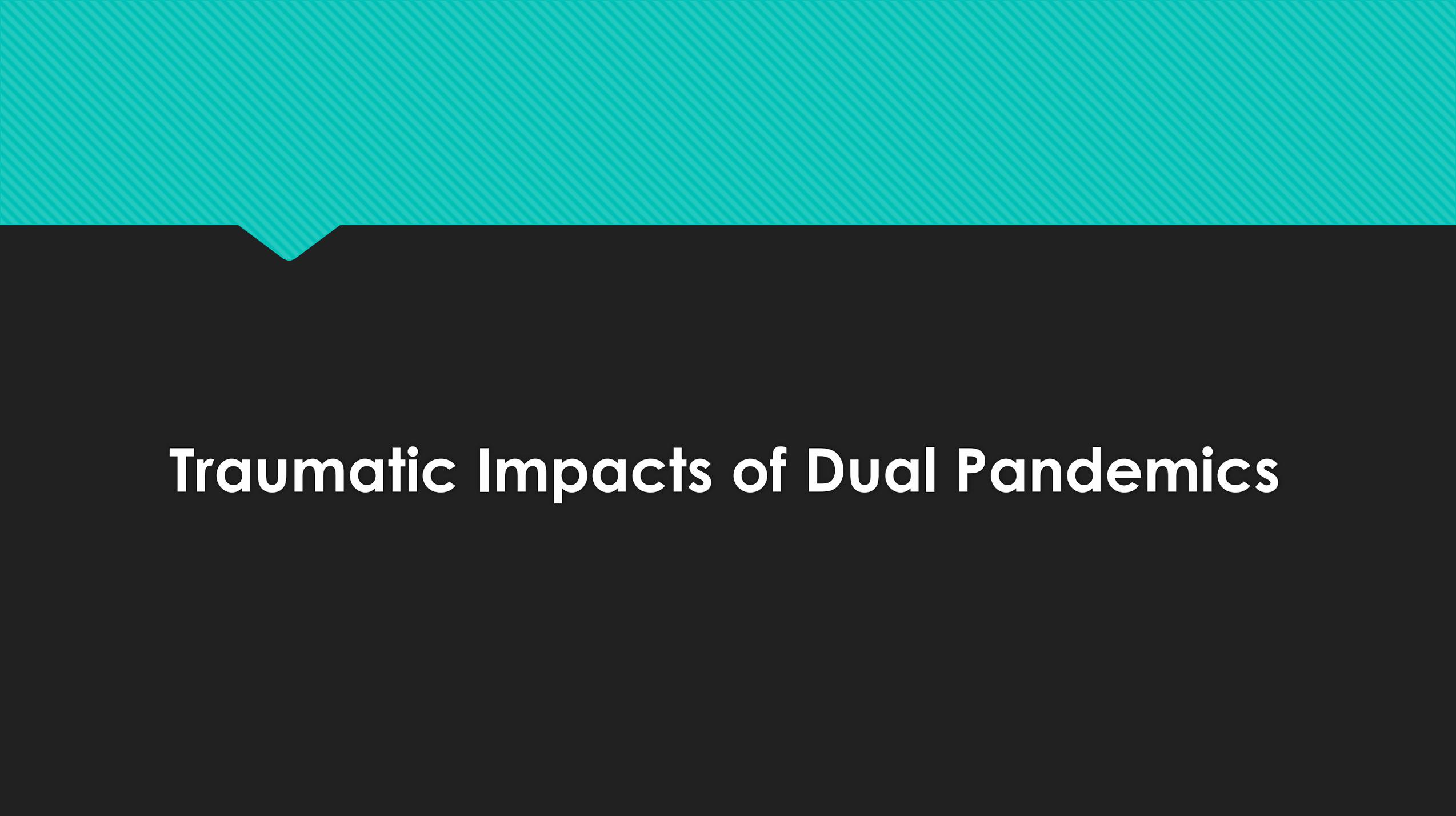
- Time Exposure –If you are spending more time of the day with someone who is abusive or aggressive, the odds of an aggressive incident go up
- Unemployment – Financial strain has been linked to aggression within relationships
- Mental health and substance abuse are increasing – Lack of resources due to COVID, fear of exposure when seeking help, lack of access to technology (substance use does not make someone violent or cause IPV, rather, decreases ability to gage severity).
- Children and home school, inability to have adequate childcare may cause increased conflict and increased levels of stress
- In general, people are experiencing more stress and more conflict at home which increases chances of these encounters to become more dangerous

COVID-19 Increase in Abuse Tactics

- The CDC states that COVID-19 has increased abuse in the following ways:
 - Abusers may further isolate and control victims
 - Abusers may share mis-information about pandemic to control or frighten victims or prevent them from seeking medical treatment or support services
 - Programs and shelters may be full or unable to assist them (many shelters have been impacted by COVID-19), or victims may fear entering shelters due to possible exposure
 - Travel restrictions may impact safety plans and ability to escape
 - Financial restrictions, especially if abuser is main financial support in family
 - Depriving victim of stimulus payments or unemployment assistance
 - Telling the victim he/she cannot work due to virus exposure, thus creating financial dependence

COVID-19 Challenges for DV Programs

- Telehealth challenges when abuser is in the home
- ODVN submitted a report outlining some challenges that community agencies, specifically shelters, are navigating:
 - Physical distancing and anti-contagion efforts are difficult, impossible for some
 - Fear of exposure is a barrier to seeking help
 - Resources are limited to adapt with this change – i.e. online schooling, technology, helping off-site
 - Workforce safety is impacted
 - Inability to provide safety measures, PPE and proper sanitization efforts, lack of FMLA for people who need to be at home with children, limited covid pay
 - Private revenue streams are interrupted
 - Fundraising events cancelled, deductions to pay roll to help off-set funding issues, VOCA significantly reduced
- Significant federal funding cuts
 - Drastic decreases in federal funding with an increased demand for services
 - More cuts expected in Fall 2021



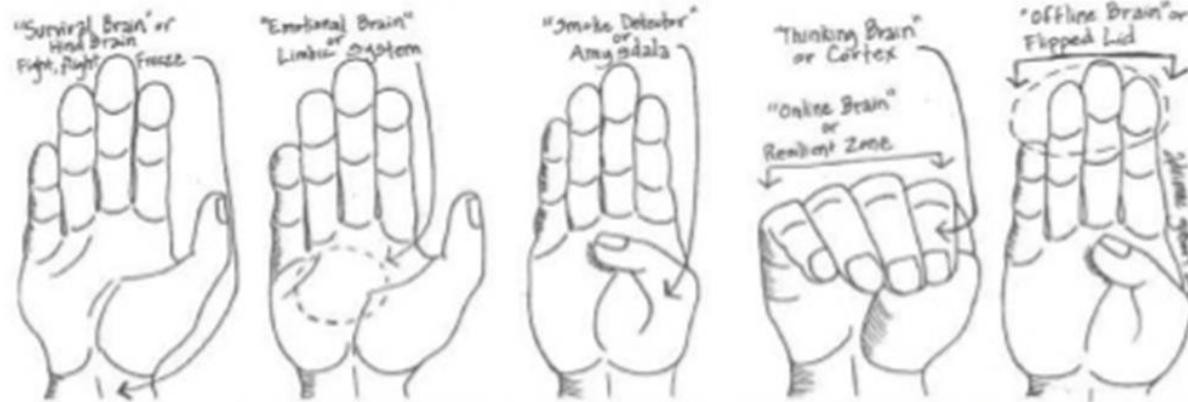
Traumatic Impacts of Dual Pandemics

Trauma

- A deeply distressing or disturbing experience (Dictionary)
- An emotional response to a terrible event (American Psychological Association)
- An event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others, and which involved fear, helplessness, or horror. (American Psychiatric Association)

Trauma and the Brain

Understanding the Brain Hand Brain Model, Dr. Dan Siegal



Survival Brain

Sensation
Autonomic functions
Survival strategies:
fight, flight,
freeze, submit,
& collapse

Emotional Brain

Expression/
regulation of
feeling
Memories
relationships/
attachment

Amygdala

Smoke alarm

Thinking Brain

Critical thinking
Problem solving,
planning,
creativity,
beliefs, impulse
control

Offline Brain

Survival brain
in control
Not able to
access the
thinking brain.



Dysregulated Post-Trauma Brain

- Overstimulated Amygdala
- Underactive Hippocampus
- Ineffective Variability
- Clients who are experiencing active abuse have constant heightened trauma responses

Effects of IPV on Children

- When young children witness IPV there is often a myth that they do not understand what is happening and are therefore not effected.
- Infants and toddlers understand IPV by sensory input and respond as such.
 - Crying/being fussy
 - Intense separation anxiety
 - Difficulties with sleeping
 - Difficulties with eating
 - Growth stunts
 - Poor or delayed language acquisition
 - Biting
 - Hitting
 - Kicking

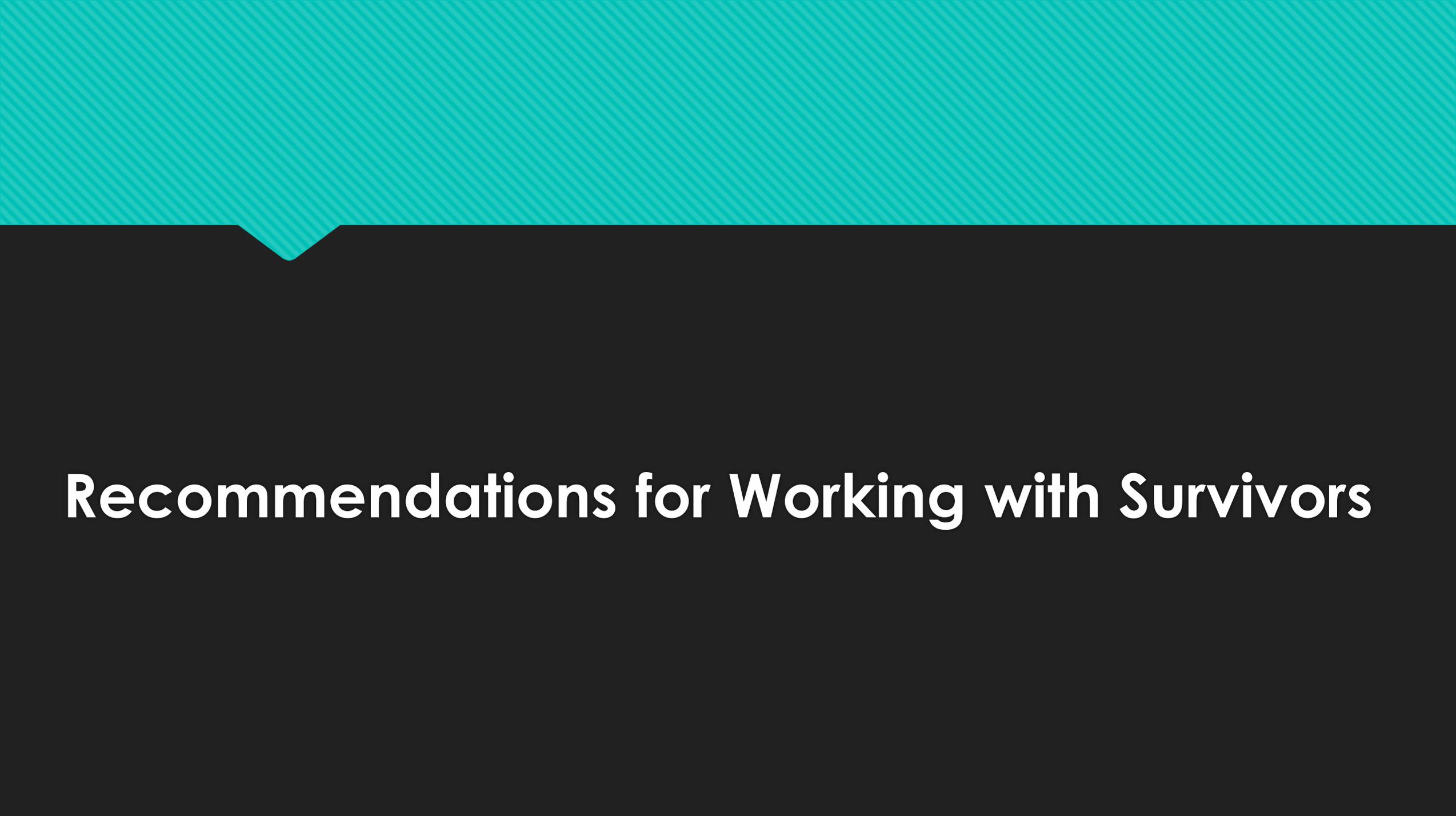
Effects of IPV on Adolescence

- Adolescence is varied in age span as it is considered to be the start of puberty and beyond.
- Effects of IPV in adolescence may include:
 - Antisocial behaviors
 - Delinquency
 - Running away from home
 - Risk taking behaviors
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Suicidal Ideation
 - Embarrassment of home
 - Nightmares
 - Poor hygiene
 - Feeling ill frequently
 - Substance abuse
 - Eating disorders
 - Pro violence
 - In an abusive relationship
 - Untrusting of others
 - Lying

IPV and Family Systems

- Family dynamics are severely effected by IPV in the following ways:
 - Attachment
 - Communication
 - Trust
 - Safety
 - Autonomy
 - Role confusion
 - Guilt
 - Blame
 - Identity
 - Relationships with others

COVID-19 can exacerbate the following when there is abuse happening in the home



Recommendations for Working with Survivors

Helpful tips for prevention of IPV

- Teach safe and healthy relationships skills
- Engage influential adults and peers
- Disruption of developmental pathways toward IPV
- Create protective environments
- Strengthen economic supports for families
- Support survivors to increase safety and lessen harm

CDC.gov

Helpful Tips for IPV During Pandemic

- Create a safety plan that outlines ways to remain safe while you are in your current situation, planning to leave, or after you leave
- Do not tell many family or friends about this plan, this may further risk of plan falling through or being unsuccessful
- Work out an escape plan and have a place in order to stay at
- Keep a resource card on hand in case of emergency
- Keep packed bag with important documents (birth certificate, ssc, cash)
- Keep local emergency numbers on file
- Research local shelters and call about openings during COVID-19 pandemic
- Telehealth providers – discuss safety measures

Protective Factors

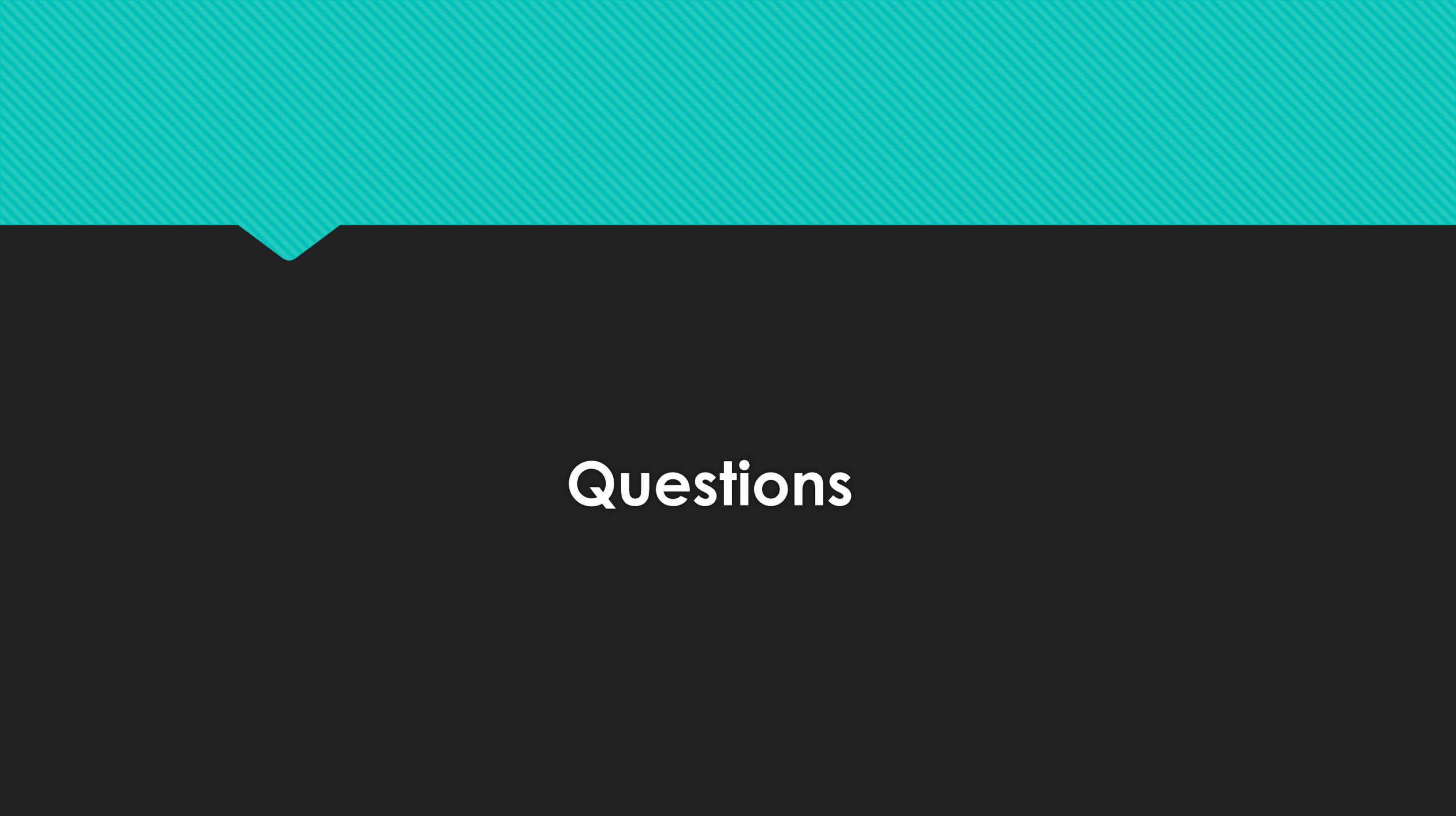
- Relationship Factors
 - High friendship quality
 - Social support (e.g. tangible help, support from neighbors)
- Community Factors
 - Neighborhood collective efficacy (i.e., community cohesiveness/support/connected-ness, mutual trust, and willingness to intervene for the common good)
 - Coordination of resources and services among community agencies

How to be Trauma Informed when Working with Survivors & Families Affected by IPV:

- Language – Allow the victim/survivor to choose how they refer to themselves, this instills a sense of control
- Control – placement of office space, chairs, allow client to be an active part of treatment
- Meet your client where they are at
- Support client decisions
- Provide psychoeducation about relationships
- Do not persuade your client to make decisions about their relationships, despite the fact that there may be red-flags or even active abuse
- Offer safety plans and additional resources for housing if need be, allow the client to select from the “platter of options”
- Advocate for client
- Demonstrate healthy relationship with client, listen and respect client, healthy boundaries

Resources for IPV

- National Domestic Violence - <https://www.thehotline.org/> | Hotline – 800-799-7233
- Ohio Domestic Violence Network – <https://www.odvn.org/> | Hotline- 800-934-9840
- Hope and Healing Summit County - <https://hopeandhealingresources.org/>
 - Battered Women’s Shelter, Summit County Hotline – 330-374-1111
 - Summit County Rape Crisis Center Hotline – 330-374-7273
- Crisis Text Line (text HOME to 741741)
- National Parent Hotline (call 1-855-427-2736)
- Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline (visit <https://www.childhelp.org/childhelp-hotline/>, opens in new tab or call 1-800-422-4453)
- Futures Without Violence (visit <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/resources-events/get-help/>.)

The image features a teal-colored top section with a fine, repeating diagonal line pattern. Below this is a solid black section. A jagged, white-outlined shape separates the two sections, resembling a stylized mountain range or a series of peaks and valleys. The word "Questions" is centered in the black section in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

Questions