

**Domestic Violence and Poverty: Family Safety and the Safety Net**

**Joint Informational Hearing**

**Assembly Committee on Human Services**

**and**

**Assembly Select Committee on Domestic Violence**

**Assemblywoman Blanca E. Rubio, Chair**

**June 19, 2018**

**1:30pm, State Capitol Room 444**

**Background Paper**

Domestic violence, sometimes referred to as intimate partner violence, is a pattern of behavior used by an individual to assert and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Domestic violence can manifest in multiple ways, including physical violence, sexual violence, and psychological and emotional abuse. According to WEAVE, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have been victims of some form of physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime<sup>i</sup>, and domestic violence is most common among women between the ages of 18 and 24<sup>ii</sup>. The economic control, coercion, and intimidation often associated with domestic violence, along with an individual's choice to flee her or his home to avoid violence, can place significant financial strain on survivors and their families. Domestic violence can often result in some individuals experiencing poverty for the first time. For others, it can further deepen poverty.

***Domestic violence and the patterns of abuse***

Abusive behavior in the beginning stages of a relationship may start out as concerning acts such as name-calling, threats, possessiveness, or distrust. These behaviors are often followed by apologies and assurances that such behavior will not be repeated, or assurances that the behavior is a result of love or care; oftentimes, however, the abuse continues and escalates over time. At first, abusive behavior may be dismissed and considered harmless (e.g., wanting the victim to spend all of her or his free time with her or his abuser because the abuser loves the victim so much). Eventually, however, this behavior can escalate into extreme control and abuse, such as threatening to hurt or even kill the victim if she or he speaks to family or friends. Domestic violence can take on many forms. Some other examples of abusive behaviors include:

- Accusing the victim of cheating
- Isolating the victim from friends and family, and other supportive relationships
- Taking the victim's money and/or controlling spending
- Dictating the way a victim dresses
- Forcing the victim to have sex with her or his abuser, or with others
- Intimidating the victim with guns, knives, or other weapons
- Pressuring the victim to use drugs or alcohol

Anyone, regardless of age, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, education level, or socioeconomic status, can be a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence, and violence can

occur between partners who are dating, living together, or are married. Domestic violence exists across communities. Teen dating violence patterns are similar to patterns of domestic violence among adults, and studies show that the mental and physical health consequences of experiencing domestic violence as a teenager can extend well into adulthood. Teens who experience domestic violence are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, experiment with drugs and alcohol, and have thoughts about suicide.<sup>iii</sup> Nearly 20.9% of female high school students and 13.4% of male high school students report being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner, and nearly 1.5 million high school students in the U.S. are physically abused by dating partners each year. Forty-three percent of dating college women reported experiencing abusive behaviors from their partner, and 1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted during their college careers<sup>iv</sup>.

Within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) community, domestic violence can include threatening to “out” a partner by revealing her or his sexual orientation or gender identity to family members, friends, or employers, using a victim’s<sup>1</sup> sexual orientation as justification for abuse. Among immigrant populations, domestic violence can include isolating the victim, through such means as preventing her or him from learning English, or preventing her or him from communicating with friends and family in her or his home country, threatening the victim with deportation or withdrawal of petitions for legal status, or destroying or withholding certain legal documents, such as passports or resident cards in order to maintain a victim’s dependence on her or his abuser. While domestic violence can take many forms, the assertion of power and control over a victim is almost always the abuser’s underlying motive.

While some victims manage to escape the physical presence of their abuser, this can cause the abuse to intensify as the abuser loses immediate control over the victim. Because of this, abusers often stalk, harass, threaten, and try to control the victim even after they have fled the immediate situation. In fact, victims may often be most in danger directly following the escape of the relationship or when they seek help. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 20% of homicide victims with restraining orders are murdered within two days of obtaining the order, and one-third are murdered within the first month<sup>v</sup>. According to a 2016 report by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime. Victims commonly reported negative impacts, such as feeling fearful, safety concerns, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder<sup>vi</sup>. In California, approximately 40% of women experience physical intimate partner violence in their lifetimes, and of those victims experiencing physical intimate partner violence, 75% of victims had children under the age of 18 living at home<sup>vii</sup>.

### ***Poverty in California***

Federal poverty guidelines (often referred to as the federal poverty line [FPL]) are determined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and are used, among other things, to

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: This paper uses the terms “victim” and “survivor” interchangeably, acknowledging that many people do not relate to either term or find either term a satisfactory descriptor for individuals who experience or have experienced domestic violence. “Victim” is a term that can operate as a reminder of the violence and control experienced by individuals who are assaulted or abused, while “survivor” acknowledges the processes of healing and/or recovery that individuals experiencing domestic violence can go through.

evaluate an individual’s or household’s financial eligibility for federal and state public benefits programs. The FPL varies by family size and location; there is one set for the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia, one set for Alaska, and one set for Hawaii<sup>viii</sup>. HHS issues poverty guidelines in late January of each year.

The 2018 FPL for the 48 contiguous states was issued on January 13, 2018, and is as follows:

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$12,140
2	\$16,460
3	\$20,780
4	\$25,100
5	\$29,420
6	\$33,740
7	\$38,060
8	\$42,380

For families/households with more than eight people, \$4,320 is added for each additional person<sup>ix</sup>.

In 2010, the Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics worked to develop a new measure that would facilitate a greater understanding of the way poverty in the United States is measured and understood. In 2011, the first Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) report was released and took into account certain factors that are not considered when the Census Bureau determines the official poverty threshold.<sup>2</sup> These factors include a broader definition of “family” such that the resources of unrelated individuals living in the household are taken into account, as well as additional resources a family may have, including supplemental food and medical benefits, and expenditures related to food, clothing, and housing, among others<sup>x</sup>.

The most recent SPM report was conducted in 2016 and found that approximately 8 million Californians – approximately 1 in 5 residents – struggle to adequately support themselves and their families. As such, California has the highest poverty rate among the 50 states, which has largely been attributed to rising housing costs in the state, according to the California Budget and Policy Center<sup>xi</sup>. In 2016, the SPM determined that the official poverty rate was 14% (compared to the Census Bureau’s estimate of 12.7%)<sup>xii</sup>.

***The importance of public assistance programs in addressing poverty***

To offset the effects of poverty, the federal government operates (and the state of California implements) public assistance programs to assist individuals and families living at or below the poverty level as they try to make ends meet.

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<sup>2</sup>Additionally, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), in collaboration with the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, has developed the California Poverty Measure (CPM), an even more nuanced look at poverty across the state.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides a cash benefit to families with children to help provide for the family's basic needs. The federal government provides grants to states to run the TANF program and states provide maintenance-of-effort funds; in California, the Department of Social Services (DSS) is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the TANF grant through the state's TANF (known in California as California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids [CalWORKs]) program. The CalWORKs program is operated locally by county welfare departments and serves participants in all 58 counties. In order to receive assistance through the CalWORKs program, families must meet certain eligibility requirements, including age, income, and assets, among others. Unless exempt, adults must also meet certain welfare-to-work requirements, and aid is limited to 48 months. Currently, the maximum monthly grant for a family of three living in a high cost county is \$714, or \$7.93 per family member, per day.

While TANF provides cash aid (along with other supportive services) to families in need, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides a food benefit to individuals and families who struggle to afford adequately nutritious food. SNAP, referred to as CalFresh in California, is a federally funded benefit (although the state and county pay a share of the costs of administration), and it is overseen by DSS and implemented by county welfare departments. Recipients of CalFresh must meet certain eligibility requirements related to gross and net income, family size, and monthly expenses, such as housing and utility costs. Food benefits are administered through an ATM-like card, known as electronic benefits transfer (EBT), and can be used to purchase foods for human consumption and seeds/plants to grow food for household use; non-food items, such as pet foods, cosmetics, household supplies, alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, and vitamins and medicines, may not be purchased with CalFresh food benefits. Currently, the maximum allowable gross income is 200% of the FPL, although households with elderly or disabled members are not subject to gross income criteria, and must instead have a net monthly income at or below 100% of the FPL. According to DSS, as of October 1, 2017, the maximum CalFresh benefit for a one-person household was \$192, or \$6.19 per day. On average, participants received \$136 per month per person, or \$4.39 per day.

While TANF and SNAP remain two of the largest public assistance programs aimed at alleviating poverty, low-income Americans can also access other programs, such as Unemployment Insurance (UI), Medicaid, Medicare, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), among others.

### ***Domestic violence and poverty***

Domestic violence does not discriminate based on one's placement along the socioeconomic spectrum. Particular income levels, neighborhoods, employment sectors, or savings account balances do not insulate individuals from falling prey to intimate partner violence. However, domestic violence can affect all of these factors, particularly if a survivor chooses to flee her or his abuser and home. This can result in loss of a dual income; it can mean no longer being able to share the costs of basic necessities like child care, transportation, rent, and food; and it can leave individuals and families homeless.

Domestic violence can cause poverty. And it can exacerbate it. Survivors who were not previously considered to be low-income can find their ability to work, have a place to live, and the ability to take all steps necessary to pursue a stable and secure life all undermined by

violence. A recent joint report led by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence summarized relevant research, stating that:

“Research shows that domestic violence and sexual assault occur across all racial, ethnic and economic groups. Beyond issues of prevalence, it is important to recognize that survivors from communities of color, Native American survivors, and those from other underserved communities, including immigrants, individuals with disabilities, and LGBTQ survivors often face intersecting issues that disproportionately impact marginalized communities. These issues can exacerbate and compound their vulnerability to poverty and economic instability:

- People of color experience disproportionate rates of poverty, and there are racial disparities in economic stability due to the accumulated effects of historical and ongoing structural inequalities and oppression.
- Approximately 1 in 4 Native Americans live in poverty, nearly twice the overall national poverty rate.
- LGBTQ communities experience higher rates of poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, housing instability, and economic vulnerability.
- Immigrants, particularly immigrants without documentation, face significantly higher rates of poverty, hunger, and unstable and low-paying employment.
- Disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Disability can lead to job loss and reduced earnings, barriers to education and skills development, and significant medical and other expenses. Additionally, poverty limits access to health care and other needed services, and increases the likelihood that people live and work in environments that adversely affect their health.”<sup>xiii</sup>

### *Services for survivors of domestic violence: federal responses*

Domestic violence occurs in many forms and impacts numerous facets of individuals’ and families’ lives. A number of policies and programs at the local, state, and federal level exist to address and prevent domestic violence, and to mitigate its impacts. Focusing on efforts aimed at providing services to survivors and their families, two significant policies and sources of funding exist at the federal level: the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act and the Violence Against Women Act. Additionally, provisions of the federal Victims of Crime Act specifically address domestic violence.

#### *Family Violence Prevention and Services Act*

Responding to the heightened attention given to domestic violence in the 1970s, and to local efforts to provide shelters and services, Congress held a number of hearings in the early 1980s to examine the breadth of domestic violence and possible avenues for addressing it. This culminated in Congress passing the first federal law to address domestic violence, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), in 1984.<sup>3</sup> FVPSA has been reauthorized seven

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<sup>3</sup> FVPSA was originally enacted as Title III of the Child Abuse Amendments of 1984 (P.L. 98-457); Title I amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), which was first enacted in 1974 (P.L. 93-247). Reauthorization of FVPSA has typically occurred as part of reauthorizing legislation for CAPTA.

times since; H.R. 6014, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act of 2018, was introduced on June 6<sup>th</sup> and seeks to reauthorize FVPSA at current levels for the years 2019 through 2023.

Through FVPSA, funding is appropriated (almost \$165 million in Federal Fiscal Year [FFY] 2017) for three main sets of activities, broken out as follows: direct services and supports, including shelter, for survivors and their families (\$150.5 million); a national domestic violence hotline (\$8.2 million); and efforts aimed at prevention through the Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Allies (DELTA) program ((\$5.5 million). The Family and Youth Services Bureau within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) administers the funding for both the domestic violence shelters and support, and for the hotline. The DELTA program is administered by the CDC.

Uses of funding for domestic violence shelter, support services, and program support include:

- Formula grants to states and territories, which support establishing, maintaining, and expanding programs and projects that provide shelter and supportive services and that prevent domestic violence; these grants constitute at least 70% of appropriations for shelter and support. (For FFY 2017, California received \$9.0 million in FVPSA formula grant funding for services and shelter.)
- Grants to tribes, which are formula grants to Native American Tribes (including Alaska Native Villages) and tribal organizations funded through a 10% set-aside.
- State domestic violence coalitions, authorized for funding since 1992, that act as statewide nonprofit, nongovernmental, private organizations that, among other things, include in their membership a majority of domestic violence service providers in the state and have as their primary purpose the provision of education, support, and technical assistance to such providers. (California's state domestic violence coalition is the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence [CPEDV]; CPEDV's website currently lists 159 domestic violence organization members across the state.)
- National and special issue resource centers.
- Specialized services for abused parents and children exposed to domestic violence.
- Program support and administration.

FVPSA requires the operation of a 24-hour, national, toll-free domestic violence hotline, the "National Domestic Violence Hotline," which is currently operated by a private organization that is awarded a grant by HHS. Per FVPSA, the hotline provides information and assistance to victims of domestic violence, and other individuals affected by this violence, including (but not limited to) family and household members.

Regarding FVPSA-funded prevention services, the Congressional Research Service reports that:

"Since 1994, FVPSA has authorized the HHS Secretary to award cooperative agreements to state domestic violence coalitions that coordinate local community projects to prevent domestic violence, including such violence involving youth. Congress first awarded funding for prevention activities in FY [Federal Fiscal Year] 1996 under a pilot program

carried out by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The pilot program was formalized in 2002 under a program now known as the Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliances (DELTA) program. The focus of DELTA is preventing domestic violence before it occurs, rather than responding once it happens or working to prevent its recurrence. The program has had three iterations—DELTA, which was funded through FY2012 and involved 14 states; DELTA Prep, which extended from 2008 through June 2012 and involved 19 states that did not receive the initial DELTA funds; and DELTA FOCUS, which extends the work of DELTA and DELTA Prep, involves 10 states, and is funded from March 2013 through February 2018.<sup>xxiv</sup>

### ***Violence Against Women Act***

Originally, FVPSA included funding for the provision of training and technical assistance to law enforcement personnel across the country. Authorization for this funding was discontinued in 1992, but later included in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which was initially enacted in 1994. VAWA has been reauthorized three times since its enactment, and its current reauthorization is pending. The Office on Violence Against Women was created within the Department of Justice in 1995, subsequent to the enactment of VAWA, and administers VAWA funds. VAWA expanded federal action regarding domestic violence by responding to assertions that communities were in need of a broader response to violence against women, and that penalties for perpetrators needed to be strengthened. VAWA includes provisions related to the investigation and prosecution of crimes and, in general, pertains to law enforcement and legal responses to domestic violence. However, VAWA also provides additional services and supports to victims of sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. For example, the STOP (Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Formula Grant program has 30% of its funds allocated to victim services, and, among other things, helps connect victims to resources and services, provides crisis intervention, and offers assistance with navigating legal systems. VAWA also includes Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Domestic Violence, designed to provide transitional housing services to victims, with the objective of assisting them in ultimately obtaining permanent housing.

### ***Victims of Crime Act***

The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) was enacted in 1984. It established the Crime Victims Fund (CVF), into which certain fines and penalties paid by convicted federal offenders are deposited. The fund is overseen by the Office for Victims of Crime and is used to support a number of victim services throughout the country. While the CVF is distributed for a variety of victim services, these can include domestic violence shelters, domestic violence service providers, and compensation for victims of domestic violence. According to the Congressional Research Service:

“Within the CVF, funds are available for victims of domestic violence through the Victim Compensation Formula Grants program and Victims Assistance Formula Grants program. The Victims Compensation Grants may be used to reimburse victims of crime for out-of-pocket expenses such as medical and mental health counseling expenses, lost wages, funeral and burial costs, and other costs (except property loss) authorized in a

state's compensation statute. In recent years, approximately 40% of all claims filed were for victims of domestic violence. The Victims Assistance Formula Grants may be used to provide grants to state crime victim assistance programs to administer funds for state and community-based victim service program operations. The grants support direct services to victims of crime including information and referral services, crisis counseling, temporary housing, criminal justice advocacy support, and other assistance needs. In recent years, approximately 50% of victims served by these grants were victims of domestic violence."<sup>xv</sup>

### *Services for survivors of domestic violence: the role of human services programs*

Focusing specifically on the social safety net and efforts to support individuals and families in moving out of and avoiding poverty, impacts on survivors of domestic violence can also be observed. This is particularly true for TANF and SNAP. A January 2018 joint report from the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, the Center on Poverty and Inequality, and the Economic Security and Opportunity Initiative entitled "The Difference Between Surviving and Not Surviving: Public Benefits Programs and Domestic and Sexual Violence Victims' Economic Security,"<sup>xvi</sup> described the results of a survey of over 1,100 advocates across the country working in areas of domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or poverty and related issues. Some of the key findings included:

- 84.6% of respondents reported that TANF was a critical resource for a significant number of domestic violence and/or sexual assault victims;
- 88.4% of respondents reported that SNAP was a critical resource for a significant number of domestic violence and/or SNAP victims; and
- 67.53% of respondents stated that most domestic violence victims served by their agency needed TANF to help address basic needs and establish safety and stability, and 79.67% reported the same for SNAP benefits.<sup>4</sup>

Direct observations by survey respondents regarding the role that TANF and SNAP play in the lives of survivors included the following:

"Often abusers use financial means to control their victims; many who flee abusive relationships do not have access to money of their own. This is a MAJOR reason why people, especially people with children, do not leave. Having access to receipt of benefits allows people who flee to pick up their lives faster, and feel safer faster."<sup>xvii</sup>

"For many survivors, jobs, housing, and financial stability can be affected by abusive situations and relationships. Many survivors have the skills and ability to secure jobs, and secure housing, but TANF and SNAP can be invaluable in the interim between leaving an abuser and feeling stable and safe."<sup>xviii</sup>

"Access to benefits programs contributes substantially to victim-survivor empowerment and post-trauma healing because it enables victim-survivors to take steps toward

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<sup>4</sup> The report also described responses related to the use and effects of Unemployment Insurance for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, but this program is outside the scope of this background paper and associated hearing.



addressing or remediating the trauma they have experienced while their basic needs are (at least partially) met by benefits programs.”<sup>xxix</sup>

“The trauma of domestic violence and sexual assault exacts a complex, multifaceted, and ongoing toll on the lives of victims and survivors. Benefits programs such as TANF, SNAP, and unemployment insurance constitute a vital safety net for victims who are struggling to meet their basic needs and/or support their dependents and families. The experience of trauma can derail a victim’s stability (financial, familial, and otherwise) and, if not adequately addressed, consume nearly all facets of a victim’s life, with often catastrophic consequences. Access to benefits programs contributes substantially to survivor empowerment and post-trauma healing because it enables victims to take steps toward addressing or remediating the trauma they have experienced while their basic needs are (at least partially) met by benefits programs.”<sup>xxx</sup>

Beyond the direct provision of monetary and in-kind benefits, however, programs like TANF and SNAP can also play an important role in assisting survivors of domestic violence and their families with meeting their immediate and longer-term needs by including programmatic flexibility, tailored services, and education and training for service providers. Specific responses within California’s TANF and SNAP programs are outlined below.

### ***CalWORKs***

One of the main components of TANF is the requirement that participants, unless exempt for certain reasons, participate in welfare-to-work activities aimed at preparing for and ultimately securing stable employment. While the relationship between experiences of domestic violence and the ability to find and sustain work is complex and can vary from individual to individual, some research has indicated that the need for domestic violence services can be associated with significantly lower rates of finding employment under welfare reform requirements.<sup>xxxi</sup>

The federal law that created TANF acknowledged, in part, that domestic-violence-related barriers may hinder the ability of survivors to participate in welfare-to-work activities. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 (P.L. 104-193), the federal law that created the federal TANF program, offers block grants to states to design their own welfare programs, provided they meet certain requirements, including establishing work requirements and placing a lifetime limit of five years on receipt of benefits. Alongside many other program changes and requirements, PRWORA offered states the ability to adopt a Family Violence Option for TANF recipients facing domestic violence.

The Family Violence Option enables states to establish and enforce procedures to screen and identify individuals receiving TANF assistance with a history of domestic violence, refer those individuals to counseling and supportive services, and waive program requirements when it is determined that compliance with those requirements could hinder individuals’ ability to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize individuals who have experienced, or are experiencing or at risk of experiencing, domestic violence.

AB 1542 (Ducheny), Chapter 270, Statutes of 1997, created the CalWORKs program as California’s implementation of federal welfare reform and adopted the state’s own family

violence provision which required the convening of a task force to work in consultation with DSS on developing protocols for handling cases where CalWORKs recipients are past or present victims of abuse. The state's family violence provision allows counties to waive a CalWORKs program requirement for a recipient who has been determined to be a past or present victim of abuse when it is found that good cause exists. A CalWORKs recipient is authorized to be excused from CalWORKs program requirements for good cause when the county has found that there is a condition or circumstance temporarily hindering the recipient's ability to be regularly employed or participate in welfare-to-work activities. The county welfare department must review the good cause determination at least once every three months.

Aside from good-cause waivers, the CalWORKs program contains other elements that work to identify applicant or recipient experiences of domestic violence, create programmatic flexibility to meet the needs of survivors and their families, provide training for front-line staff, and enable the provision of supportive services tailored to meet needs related to experiences of domestic violence. These include:

- Inclusion of questions specifically related to experiences of domestic violence in the Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT), the instrument a caseworker uses during an in-depth "appraisal" interview with a CalWORKs applicant to assess needs, barriers, and appropriate next steps (which can include receipt, if applicable, of domestic-violence-related counseling services).
- Eligibility for temporary and permanent CalWORKs homeless assistance, if a family's homelessness is the direct result of domestic violence as verified by a sworn statement. This includes availability of 16 consecutive days of temporary shelter assistance through the CalWORKs homeless assistance program, in addition to the 16 consecutive days available to all eligible participants.
- Referral, by the county, of applicants and recipients who are identified as victims of domestic violence to staff who are trained in serving recipients who have experienced domestic violence. The county human services agency is also required to maintain a comprehensive and current list of local domestic violence resources and to confidentiality of clients and their families.
- Requisite training of staff who work with CalWORKs recipients using curriculum that is culturally competent and, at a minimum, includes: dynamics of domestic violence, implications of CalWORKs for victims of domestic violence, features of the CalWORKs program as implemented by the county, impact of domestic violence on children of all ages, impacts of domestic violence on individuals, awareness of resources that are available in the county to victims of domestic violence, eligibility requirements for noncitizens, coordination on family support issues, crisis management/risk assessment, and management of the county worker's own biases.
- Provision, in counties electing to do so, of specific domestic violence services through the county's CalWORKs family stabilization program, designed to address family crises that may hinder participation in welfare-to-work activities.

Beginning on July 1, 2018, there will be additional changes to the CalWORKs program aimed at further addressing the needs of survivors in their families. Recently adopted legislation – AB 557 (Rubio), Chapter 691, Statutes of 2017 – authorizes, as of July 1, applicants for and

recipients of CalWORKs benefits who have experienced domestic violence to be eligible for CalWORKs homeless assistance and good-cause exemptions from school participation and immunization requirements under specified circumstances.

Specifically, AB 557 will enable domestic violence to be a reason for which good cause may be found by a county to still allow the needs of a child to be considered when computing a family's CalWORKs grant, despite that child not meeting CalWORKs school attendance rules for children 16 years old or older. (Typically, when exception criteria do not apply, if a child who is over the age of 15 and deemed chronically truant, and meets other criteria, the needs of that child would not be used in determining the family's grant, thereby reducing their monthly cash benefit.)

Additionally, the CalWORKs program has immunization rules requiring that all children in a CalWORKs household under the age of six be immunized, unless good cause (such as child or family illness, lack of reasonable access to immunization services, and the like) is found to exist for not complying. AB 557 will add domestic violence as a reason for which such good cause may be found.

Lastly, AB 557 will enable a CalWORKs applicant, if she or he provides a sworn statement attesting to past or present domestic abuse and is fleeing her or his abuser, to be deemed homeless, and therefore eligible for temporary homeless assistance, regardless of any income and assets attributable to the alleged abuser.

### ***CalFresh***

As previously discussed, SNAP benefits have been reported to be a critical resource for survivors of domestic violence. State law, along with federal and state regulations regarding CalFresh, enables survivors to access nutrition benefits while in, or on a waiting list for, a domestic violence shelter, and defer survivors from required placement in the CalFresh Employment and Training Program.

Specifically, AB 2057 (Stone), Chapter 859, Statutes of 2016, authorized a survivor of domestic violence, who is a resident of a shelter and included as a member of a CalFresh household that also includes the abuser, to receive an additional allotment of benefits as a separate household. Additionally, the bill required DSS to develop and provide information on CalFresh eligibility and processing timelines to domestic violence shelters. AB 2057 also required that county human services agencies include survivors of domestic violence among the individuals that must be deferred from mandatory participation in the CalFresh Employment and Training program, which includes work experience, education, vocational training, job search, and other activities (however, deferred individuals may still volunteer to participate).

### ***Conclusion***

Addressing and preventing domestic violence in its many forms and mitigating the impacts it has on survivors and their families – including impacts that can cause or deepen experiences of poverty – requires a broad range of responses. Focusing specifically on the state- and county-level human services system in California – and in particular, the CalWORKs and CalFresh

programs – there exist resources and supports for survivors and their families. Recent legislation – including AB 2057 (Stone), Chapter 859, Statutes of 2016, and AB 557 (Rubio), Chapter 691, Statutes of 2017 – have served to further broaden and strengthen these supports. The intersection between domestic violence and poverty is multifaceted and complex; survivors and their families not only have immediate needs related to safety, shelter, and survival, but many have longer-term needs related to financial independence and security. The state’s safety net can play an important role in meeting both sets of needs. By continuing its efforts to strengthen and refine the capacity of the human services system to address domestic violence, California can better support survivors and their families in breaking cycles of both violence and poverty.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.weaveinc.org/get-informed-domestic-violence>

<sup>ii</sup> National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, *Facts About Dating Abuse and Teen Violence*, 2015.

[https://www.weaveinc.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/dating\\_abuse\\_and\\_teen\\_violence\\_ncadv.pdf](https://www.weaveinc.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/dating_abuse_and_teen_violence_ncadv.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-dating-violence.aspx>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.weaveinc.org/get-informed-domestic-violence>

<sup>v</sup> <https://ncadv.org/learn-more>

<sup>vi</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-infographic-2016.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, *California Domestic Violence Fact Sheet*, 2011.

[http://ywcasgv.org/DV\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_2011.pdf](http://ywcasgv.org/DV_Fact_Sheet_2011.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> <https://aspe.hhs.gov/frequently-asked-questions-related-poverty-guidelines-and-poverty>

<sup>ix</sup> <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

<sup>x</sup> Liana Fox, *The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2016: Current Population Reports*, United States Census Bureau, September 2017. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-261.pdf>

<sup>xi</sup> <http://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/new-census-figures-show-1-5-californians-struggle-get/>

<sup>xii</sup> <https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/faq/what-current-poverty-rate-united-states>

<sup>xiii</sup> Shaina Goodman, *The Difference Between Surviving and Not Surviving: Public Benefits Programs and Domestic and Sexual Violence Victims’ Economic Security*, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, January 2018 , p. 1.

<sup>xiv</sup> Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcantara, *Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA): Background and Funding*, Congressional Research Service, September 13, 2017, p.18.

<sup>xv</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>xvi</sup> Shaina Goodman, *The Difference Between Surviving and Not Surviving: Public Benefits Programs and Domestic and Sexual Violence Victims’ Economic Security*, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, January 2018.

<sup>xvii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>xviii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>xix</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>xx</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>xxi</sup> Sandra Naylor Goodwin, Daniel Chandler, and Joan Meisel, *Violence Against Women: The Role of Welfare Reform*, California Institute for Mental Health for the U.S. Department of Justice, April 11, 2003.