

Health care providers need training to recognize signs of domestic violence, says nursing expert

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Despite billions of dollars spent on health care each year, the United States ranks 27th out of 33 developed countries for life expectancy at birth. Leading causes of infant mortality are complications related to pre-term birth or low birth weight-outcomes that have been linked with domestic violence. A University of Missouri researcher says a key factor in addressing this issue is preventing violence against mothers and children.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has released "Healthy People 2020", a 10-year plan for improving the health of Americans. Tina Bloom, an assistant professor in the Sinclair School of Nursing, says the 2020 objectives provide support for those who work to prevent domestic violence, but more training is needed for [health care providers](#) to recognize the signs of abuse and connect victims with appropriate resources in their communities.

"Health care providers are not well trained to routinely screen or recognize the signs of domestic violence," Bloom said. "They don't know how to ask about abuse, what to say or how to connect abused women with help. We need to engage with current students, our future health care providers, to bring this issue to the forefront."

According to Bloom, addressing maternal-child [health disparities](#) goes beyond the issue of domestic violence. Abused women need access to

resources for finding employment, affordable and safe housing, financial assistance, transportation and health care. These factors, defined in Healthy People 2020 as social determinants of health, heavily influence women's responses to violence and [health outcomes](#) of women and children.

"Healthy moms produce healthy babies and together they give rise to a healthy population," Bloom said. "As a maternal-child health researcher, I am particularly pleased that the Healthy People objectives have expanded to include injury and [violence prevention](#) for women and children and talk explicitly about these key social determinants of health."

More information: These recommendations were discussed in Bloom's recent article in the *Western Journal of Nursing*, "The Greatest Asset: Addressing Maternal-Child Health Disparities in the United States."

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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