

# Study identifies barriers to intimate partner violence services

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Texas has a shortage of beds for survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV), and although alternatives may be offered, survivors may find themselves isolated from much-needed services, such as crisis intervention, legal advocacy, support groups, medical advocacy, individual counseling and others, according to a study by the Crime Victims' Institute.

The shortage of bed space also affects how long survivors can remain in a [shelter](#), with the average stays lasting from six to 50 days, according to "A Statewide Survey of Family Violence Shelter Directors in Texas" by Lisa Muftic, assistant director of the Crime Victims' Institute, and Jonathan Grubb of Sam Houston State University, Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology.

"IPV is considered a global social problem significantly impacting the physical and mental health of survivors and their family members," Muftic said. "As a whole, this study provides an important step forward in recognizing the expansiveness of services to a variety of underserved populations while also acknowledging that multiple barriers continue to limit survivors' utilization of shelter services."

The study was based on a survey of shelter directors across the state. While the State Council on Family Violence identified 81, 24-hour emergency shelters in the state, the study was based on responses from 27 shelter directors who completed online surveys. According to directors surveyed, their shelters served between 20 and 1,633 survivors

in 2013, with an average of 366 per facility, which included an average of 186 children and 10 men.

Among those seeking shelter services, most were women, with more than one-third married to their abuser, more than one-third having sought prior assistance from the shelter, one-quarter having sought assistance from another shelter in the preceding 12 months, and one in ten being pregnant at the time of intake. In addition, 4.7 percent were minors seeking shelter independently.

Of the shelters whose directors participated in the survey, all provided basic services in crisis management, legal advocacy, [support groups](#) and community education and awareness, and the majority of shelters also offered medical advocacy, individual counseling and other services. However, shelter directors identified three main barriers for survivors to access their services, including language, family issues, and the lack of finances.

Directors indicated that many [survivors](#) remain in fear of their husbands or partners and future abuse as well as concerns that their children will be taken away from them. Others don't have transportation, child care or money to be able to leave. Still others face citizenship issues or language barriers and cannot speak English or fear deportation.

**More information:** The latest report on Intimate Partner Violence and Family Violence Shelters, along with research on other victim issues, can be found at [www.crimevictimsinstitute.org/publications/](http://www.crimevictimsinstitute.org/publications/)

Provided by Sam Houston State University

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