

**CWLA****THE NETWORKER**

Connecting child-serving professionals  
with resources, events, and each other.



## **Bridging the Gaps: Child Welfare's Vital Role in Public Health Emergencies Addressing Intimate Partner Violence**

**By Asia Leach, CWLA Intern**

The National Academies report, "Essential Health Care Services Addressing Intimate Partner Violence," released on January 11, 2024, serves as a pivotal resource for child welfare agencies and their staff to be effective partners with other key governmental agencies to address gaps in the health care delivery system during public health emergencies for the families who experience intimate partner violence (IPV).

The National Academies committee members focused their efforts on the development of a framework for delivering essential preventive and primary healthcare services related to IPV during public health emergencies to address the gaps.

The motivation for their study was rooted in the understanding that existing healthcare and emergency response mechanisms were insufficient to meet the specific needs of those experiencing IPV during crises. By filling this gap with evidence-based recommendations and a systematic approach, their work aimed to empower healthcare providers, emergency responders, and public agencies to effectively address intimate partner violence within the challenging context of public health emergencies.

The key recommendations in the report highlight the imperative need to establish a comprehensive framework utilizing an all-hazards approach to ensure the provision of essential healthcare services for this population during public health emergencies. The report stresses the importance of addressing health equity, particularly by addressing the specific needs of historically marginalized communities, and emphasized that care programs be evaluated. The report outlines a staged approach, which includes training for healthcare personnel and the development of standardized guidance. It serves as a call to action for coordinated planning and response protocols across different government levels,

emphasizing the continuous provision of essential healthcare services for individuals affected by IPV.

Additional recommendations include maintaining terminology consistency, offering support for best practices, and understanding the prevalence of IPV in specific populations. Equally essential are public information sessions involving healthcare professionals, training for disaster health responders in IPV settings, and advocacy for standardized data collection methods. The roles of FEMA and Health Departments are underscored for their critical importance in addressing health-related emergencies, emphasizing the necessity for clear communication, effective screening, and ensuring privacy for disclosure. The report also highlights the need for ongoing attention to IPV in emergency response and the role of the healthcare system as a valuable resource for those experiencing IPV.

The report emphasizes that public and private agencies, such as child welfare, need to consider these recommendations in the context of their disaster planning to ensure they are well-prepared to do their part in assisting with the unique challenges faced by individuals experiencing IPV during public health emergencies. Given that many of the families involved with child welfare agencies experience IPV, child welfare has an important part to play in assisting this population. Recognition of the specific health consequences of IPV, including injuries, reproductive health effects, and mental disorders, can also help enhance child welfare professionals' ability to coordinate the provision of comprehensive and targeted support to families and adolescents affected by domestic violence.

The National Academies report offers a significant guide for child welfare agencies and their direct practice staff, providing insights, strategies, and a call to action for improving services to those who experience intimate partner violence during public health emergencies. Child welfare agencies are encouraged to integrate these recommendations into their disaster response plans to improve practices, foster collaboration, enhance training, and ensure an empathetic and effective response to individuals and families experiencing IPV.

Read the full report:

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/27425/essential-health-care-services-addressing-intimate-partner-violence>



Asia Leach is a dedicated graduate student pursuing her master's degree in social work at Chamberlain University, specializing in child welfare. Her profound commitment lies in serving families affected by poverty, reflecting her strong advocacy for social justice and equity in child and family welfare. Approaching her final semester, Asia is enthusiastic about translating her education and skills into meaningful contributions to this vital area of practice.