

# Healing Together: Shifting Approaches to End Intimate Partner Violence

## Policy Paper Summary

**PolicyLink**

ALLIANCE FOR  
**Boys and Men  
of Color**

**When our relationships are safe and healthy, so are our communities.**

Intimate partner violence is a frightening reality for millions of Californians and a public health crisis.

Ending cycles of violence and fostering healthy relationships is possible, but only if we address root causes of violence and provide opportunities for real accountability and healing.

For decades, women in the anti-violence movement have led the critical work of meeting the immediate safety needs of survivors—saving countless lives. As we build on these efforts to end partner violence, we must do more to address the root causes of violence and the need for healing for all—including those who have caused harm.

Our current responses to partner violence rely primarily on the criminal-legal system, which doesn't create sustained safety and exacerbates poverty, racial inequity, and family instability, which increases the likelihood of violence re-occurring.

When vulnerable communities have the power and resources needed to cultivate safe and healthy relationships, we all benefit.

We can build safe and accountable communities by focusing on racial equity and healing—instead of punishment—to end violence against women, and all people along the gender spectrum.

Healing Together aims to shift away from punitive policies and systems that produce violence, and expand community-based approaches that focus on prevention, accountability, and healing for all.

## Root Causes of Intimate Partner Violence

**Policy decisions** that create environments of economic insecurity, family and community fragmentation, and exclusion and isolation increase the likelihood of violence.<sup>1</sup>

**Harmful norms about masculinity** limit the ability of men to be vulnerable and engage in opportunities for healing.

**Childhood exposure to partner violence** increases the risk of partner violence in adulthood; boys who witness partner violence are more likely to harm their partners as adults, while girls are more likely to be harmed by partners as adults.<sup>2</sup>



## Key Facts

**1 in 3 California women will be harmed by a partner at least once in their lifetime; Black, Native American, and bisexual women, and transgender people experience the highest rates of violence.**<sup>3, 4</sup>

**Approximately 3 in 4 people who harm their partners are men.**<sup>5</sup>

**Nearly 1 in 5 California children have been exposed to partner violence.**<sup>6</sup>

**Around half of all instances of intimate partner violence go unreported to the police, and for survivors who do call the police,<sup>7</sup> about 75 percent said police involvement had no impact or left them less safe.**<sup>8</sup>

**Current system interventions like mandatory arrest policies<sup>9</sup> and “batterer intervention programs” have not been shown to increase safety.**<sup>10</sup>

### Together, we can end intimate partner violence:

- Challenge the inequitable conditions that keep people trapped in cycles of violence.
- Shrink the harmful and ineffective criminal-legal system.
- Invest in community-based approaches that heal trauma, and foster accountability and safety.



**My dad went to prison for domestic violence multiple times—it only made the violence worse. We needed a trauma recovery center back then, they could have helped him and our family to heal and be safe.**

Peter Elias, age 19  
Fathers and Families of San Joaquin

## Policy Recommendations

### Align infrastructure, boost funding, and focus on prevention

- Scale prevention strategies through increased investments in community-based efforts.
- Establish a statewide Office of Safe Communities to coordinate effective, community-based solutions to end cycles of violence, promote healing, and build safety.

### Reimagine intimate partner violence intervention programs for people who cause harm

- Reimagine intervention programs by shifting the responsibility for approval, oversight, standardization, and alignment of partner violence intervention programs from probation to public health departments.
- Eliminate fines and fees for domestic violence convictions and ensure stable, adequate funding for interventions and supports.

### Maximize the capacity of schools to serve as primary prevention centers for youth

- Improve access to school counselors, psychologists, and social workers.
- Embrace the community-schools model.

### Decrease contact with law enforcement and ensure officer accountability

- Invest in and expand restorative responses to intimate partner violence.
- Promote mandatory involvement of trauma-informed community intervention workers in incidents of law enforcement response to intimate partner violence.

### Limit negative impact of systems

- Protect survivors and their parental rights by offering supports instead of separating families.
- Remove mandatory sentencing and require judges to assign sentences and reinvest savings in intervention programs.
- Scale prevention programming for incarcerated people.

## Join the Healing Together campaign and download the full report at:

[allianceforbmoc.org/campaigns/healing-together](https://allianceforbmoc.org/campaigns/healing-together)

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