

## APA Official Actions

# Position Statement on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Approved by the Board of Trustees, March 2023

Approved by the Assembly, November 2022

“Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees. . . These are . . . position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects. . .” – *APA Operations Manual*

### **Issue:**

Research has consistently documented that abuse by an intimate partner can have significant mental health consequences. At the same time, there are high rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) reported among people who receive treatment for mental health and substance use disorder. Those who cause harm often deliberately use mental health and substance use-related issues to undermine and control their partners by keeping them from achieving their treatment and recovery goals. These forms of abuse – referred to as mental health and substance use coercion – not only jeopardize the well-being of IPV survivors and their children, but they also compromise access to care for mental health and substance use disorder treatment. Stigma associated with substance use and mental illness reinforces abusers’ abilities to control their partners; undermine them in custody battles; and discredit them with friends, family, law enforcement, child protective services, and courts.

### **APA Position:**

**It is the position of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) that:**

- **Guidelines are needed for responding to IPV in clinical settings**
- **Psychiatric education and training on IPV are necessary for medical students, residents, fellows, and physicians, including training on best practices for responding to IPV survivors and their children in the context of mental health treatment**
- **Research is needed to improve mental health care for IPV victims and their children**
- **Increased funding for IPV prevention and services is needed**
- **Increased access to culturally relevant, linguistically accessible, gender responsive, IPV- and trauma-informed mental health and substance use disorder treatment and recovery support services is needed**
- **IPV-informed education and training strengthen systems for survivors of IPV.**

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