



Survivor Input on Workplace Support

Survivor Input on Workplace Supports

Though we didn't specifically ask about workplaces, a number of survivors shared how their workplaces were either supportive or unsupportive, and how that impacted their experiences.

In the interviews and surveys, survivors shared the following:

- 9 named their workplace as one of their communities
- 2 named a coworker as helpful in responding to them and 2 named an employer as helpful
- 14 said they needed time off from work or school after their experience
- 23 said they would need time off from work or school to participate in a restorative justice process

"I can't believe I kept my job through all of this, the things he sent to my job. There's got to be something for the workplace...HR wanted to know what to do so they wouldn't get sued, and then protect the agency. To continually remind them that he was coming after ME, not coming after you [the employer/other employees]...If I had a packet to give them, that would be so helpful. And succinctly, what are your legal rights?...They had put me on a PIP, but when I returned [from medical leave] they changed their entire manual...they added the word domestic violence like 40 times. Them changing all that was just amazing. If other people had the opportunity to keep their job, an advocate to go with them to HR, to help them understand."

"I want to see employers understand that DV happens and women lose their jobs because of it. I had to go to court many times, needed the time off, and my employer was not flexible."

"My boss was my friend and supported me at work and figuring things out when I was confused, and encouraged me to go to DVSA, and it's a really supportive workplace."

“He refused to do court paperwork in a timely fashion, so the police kept going to his workplace, and then his coworkers thought he was a poor victim who kept getting served over and over with court warrant.”

“The physical abuse repeated every other day...I missed hours of work due to being physically hurt.”

“He already had a new victim set up while all this was happening, he sent her to places I was working to get a job and harass me...”

“My old co-worker, who was one of my closest friends, I told her the day after. I asked her for the day off and she just didn't have enough empathy to not make me go to work.”

“When we separated...My coworkers let the security officer know because they were fearful he would show up at work. I had to have a meeting with security department about a safety plan because my coworkers were afraid. It went well, but very uncomfortable.”

“I also ended up going to jail because I retaliated to get away from her. I had a DV charge and wasn't able to get a job because of it...I can get it expunged but it would cost me...”

Relevant General Input from Survivors

- 30% of respondents named manipulation as a part of domestic violence (including emotional manipulation, such as the abuser making threats physically harming themselves)

“It was bit by bit. Abuse by words.”

- 37% of respondents talked about the difficulty of getting free from the abuser

“He kept begging me to take him back and I would take him back, I didn't know what was going on, I stayed with him after breaking up 12 times, I don't know why I did that.”

- 19% of respondents had challenges with naming what happened to them
“The others are more ambiguous, but I have been on every side of domestic and sexual abuse...”
- 12% said they were not given enough time (being told to get over it, not having time off of work, not having enough time for therapy)
“After I left, a couple of months later, my mom told me, ‘You should be over it by now.’”
- 20% experienced stigma (including being told not to talk about it)
“I could feel the embarrassment and ‘don’t talk about it’ thing from her.”
- 19% described the community response as positive
“[The] police involved said, ‘I will do everything I can to find out who did this.’”
- 19% described the community response as negative
“I feel like the questions they’re expected to ask are very – they don’t have a survivor’s mental state in mind. I know it’s a systems thing, they’re just trying to get succinct information or evidence, but it’s really intimidating and doesn’t feel – it feels like an interrogation.”

Background

In the summer and fall of 2022, the S/DV Commission sought feedback from survivors of domestic and sexual violence. We did semi-structured interviews and surveys with more than 40 survivors, after which we conducted thematic analysis of the responses and developed this survivor input report. This feedback was gathered and analyzed in conjunction with and under the guidance of Dr. Christina Byrne, a researcher and psychology professor at Western Washington University.

In the interviews and surveys, survivors shared their experiences, what justice and healing could look like for them, and their feedback about restorative justice processes.

Survivors described experiences that included:

- One-time violence and persistent, on-going violence
- Lethal physical violence and severe emotional abuse
- Abuse that lasted for months, years, and decades
- Sexual violence experiences across the lifespan
- Sexual violence committed by trusted adults, friends, partners, neighbors, and dates
- Manipulation and coercion as a part of domestic violence (30%) and sexual assault (16%)
- Abusers using children to manipulate and abuse the survivor (19%)
- Retaliation from the abuser and from the broader community
- Systems responses that helped (17%), systems responses that compounded harm (17%), and systems that were absent or inaccessible
- Co-occurring substance abuse and mental illness
- Repeated victimization experiences, by the same abuser (77%) and by different abusers (30%)

“As this was happening to my body, I had a thought that I joined the many generations of women that I come from, in this culture.”

Read the full report [on our website](#).