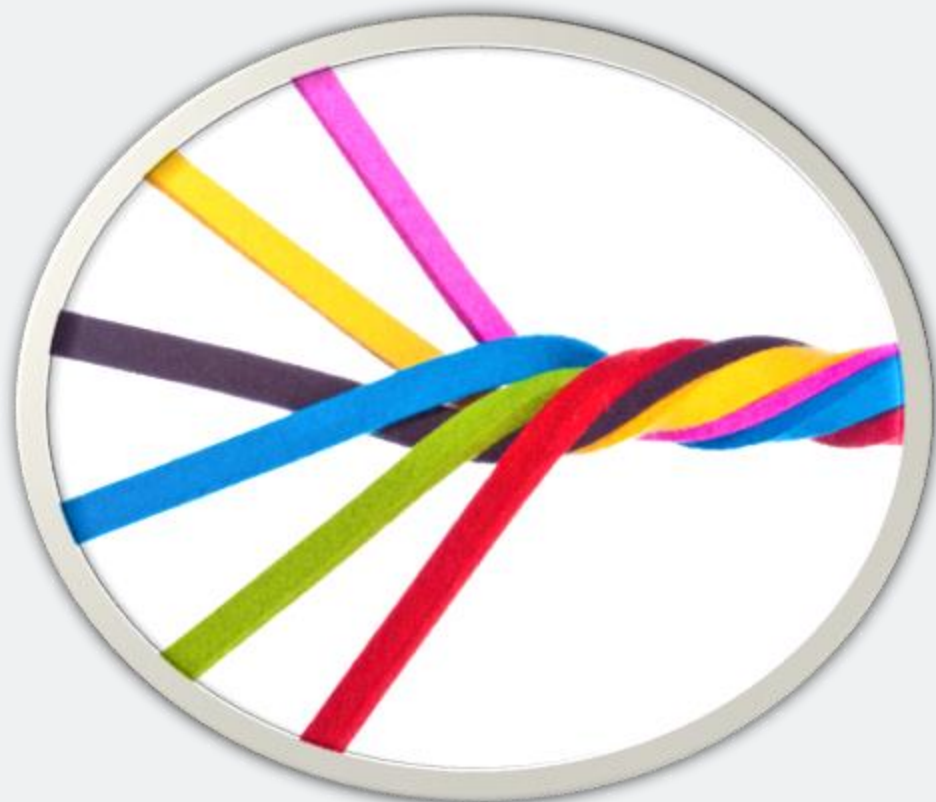


BIRTHING PEOPLE , SUBSTANCE USE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Examining the Intersections & Connecting Survivors to Supports

Mae Reale

PA Coalition Against Domestic Violence



Our member is a network of 56 local domestic violence programs provides free and confidential direct services and survivors of domestic violence and their children in all 67 counties of the Commonwealth.

Together, local programs and the Coalition work in collaboration to deliver a continuum of services, support, and systems to help survivors find safety, obtain justice, and build lives free of abuse.

Defining Domestic Violence

A **pattern** of **coercive behavior** used by one person to **gain and maintain power and control** over another in an intimate or familial relationship.

Domestic Violence Counts: A Snapshot of One Day in PA

On just ONE completely normal day in September 2025, 56 local domestic violence programs in PA served:

2,799 Individuals

1,839 adult and children survivors found refuge in emergency shelters, transitional housing, hotels, motels, or other housing

960 non-residential adult and child supportive services including counseling, legal advocacy, and support groups.

There were also 782 hotline contacts on that day.

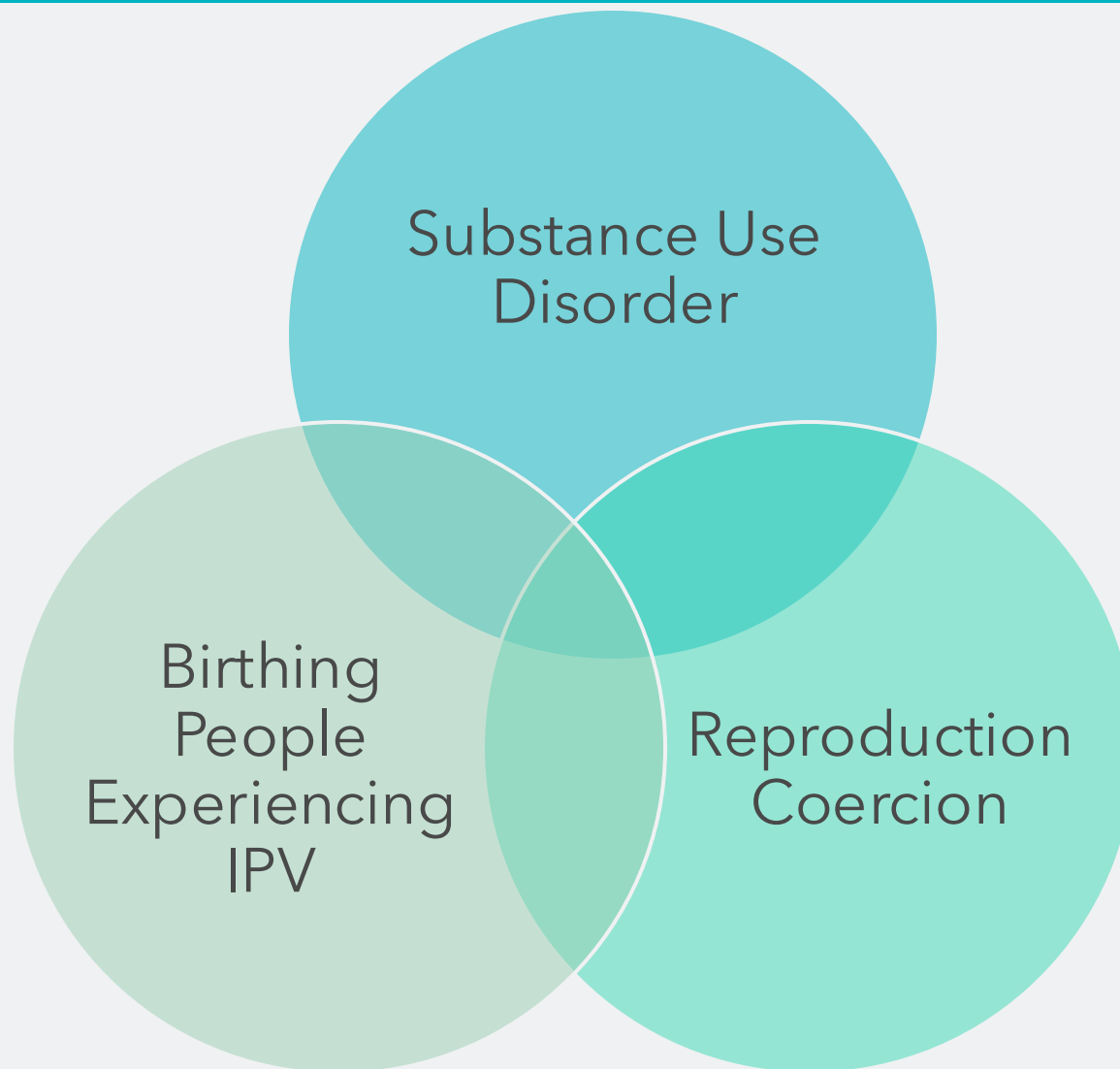
Total: 3,581



People who abuse use many different, intersecting tactics to gain power and control.

Domestic violence is deeply nuanced and every survivor's experience is unique.

Understanding Complex Connections



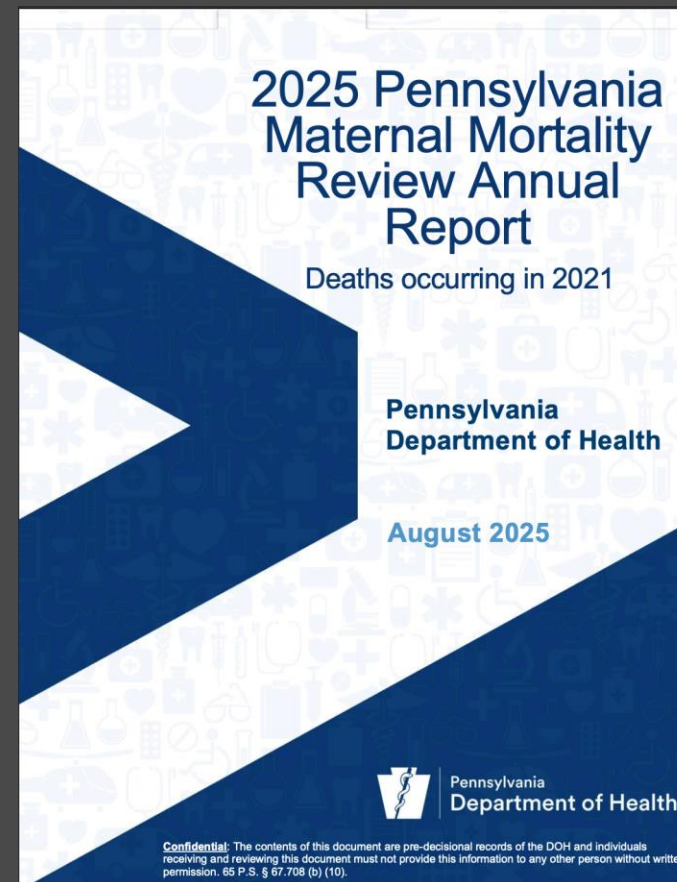
Key Point



Ending a relationship is
not always safe or desired.

From PA's MMRC 2025 Report

"The PA and Philadelphia MMRCs devised 45 recommendations for 20 cases, or 15% of all cases, where IPV was identified, which highlights that improvements must be made to serve individuals experiencing IPV. Those recommendations are found throughout the priority areas [named in this report]."



From: <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/health/documents/topics/documents/programs/2025%20MMR%20Report.pdf>

FROM PA'S MMRC 2025 REPORT

The most common themes of IPV recommendations include:

- Screening of pregnant individuals throughout pregnancy.
- Warm hand-off referrals to community organizations.
- Education on IPV and trauma-informed care for providers.

From: <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/health/documents/topics/documents/programs/2025%20MMR%20Report.pdf>



People who are abusive gain additional coercive tactics when someone is or has recently been pregnant.

Common Potential Indicators of DV

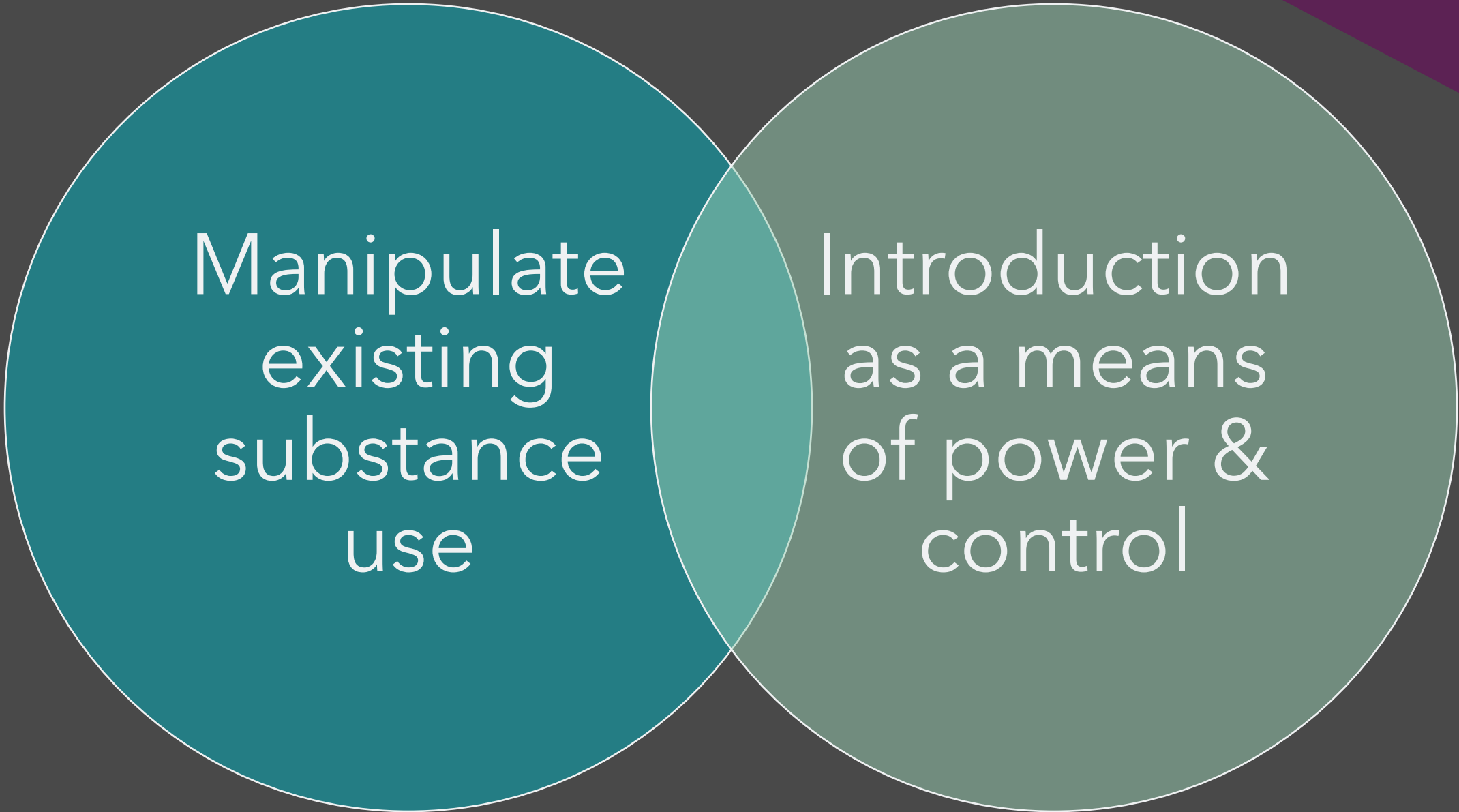
Limited
prenatal care

Inadequate
weight gain
during
pregnancy

Limited access
to resources
(transportation,
insurance,
employment)

Multiple
pregnancies in
a short span of
time

Substance Use



Manipulate
existing
substance
use

Introduction
as a means
of power &
control

Survivors who are birthing people experience:

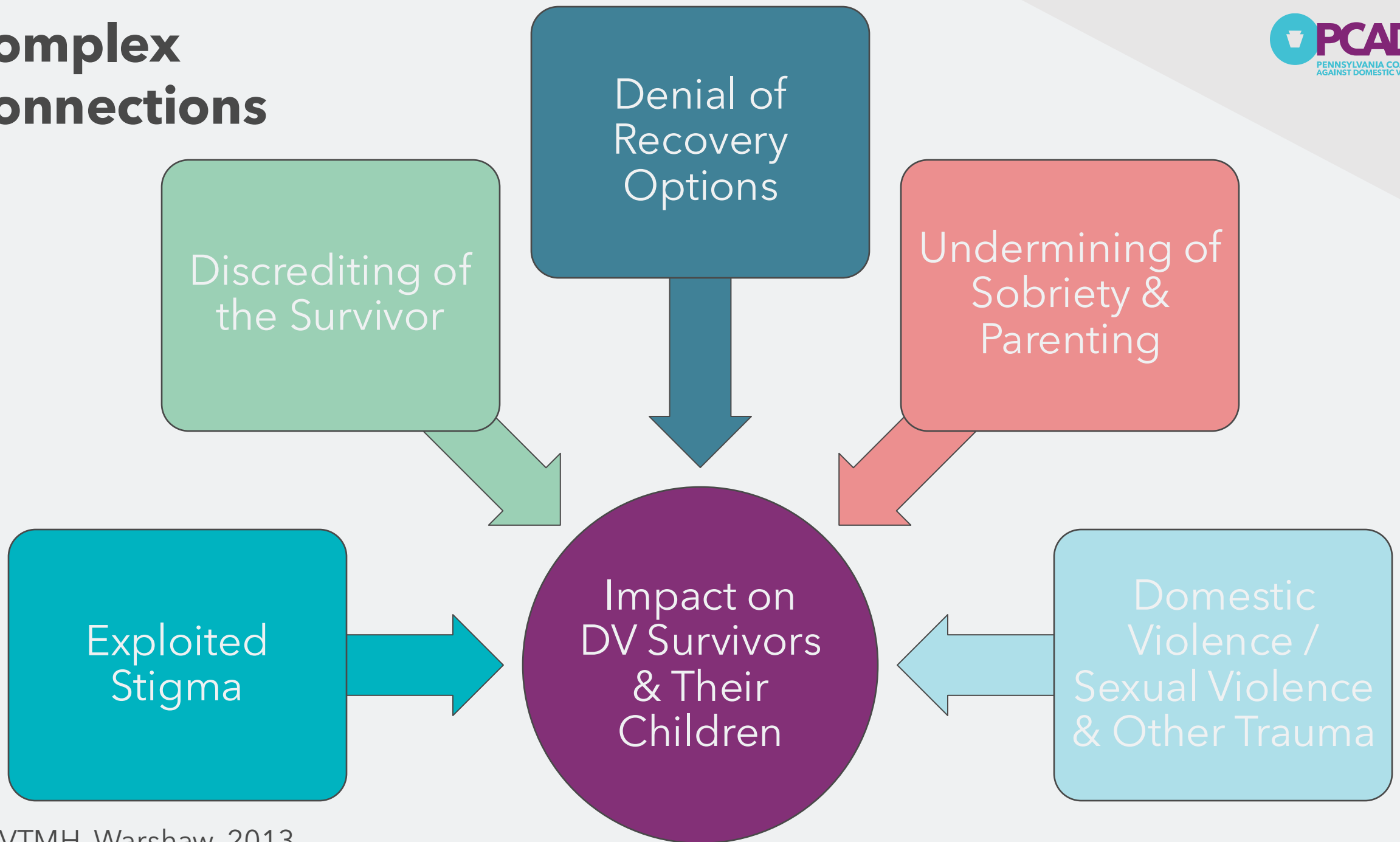


Increased
judgment, stigma,
and violence



Reduced Access to
Healthcare

Complex Connections



MEET MORGAN

24 years
old

Bi-racial

Pregnant
with her
second
child.

Has one
child,
Jesse, who
lives with
Morgan's
ex, Frank.

Lives in a
rural area.

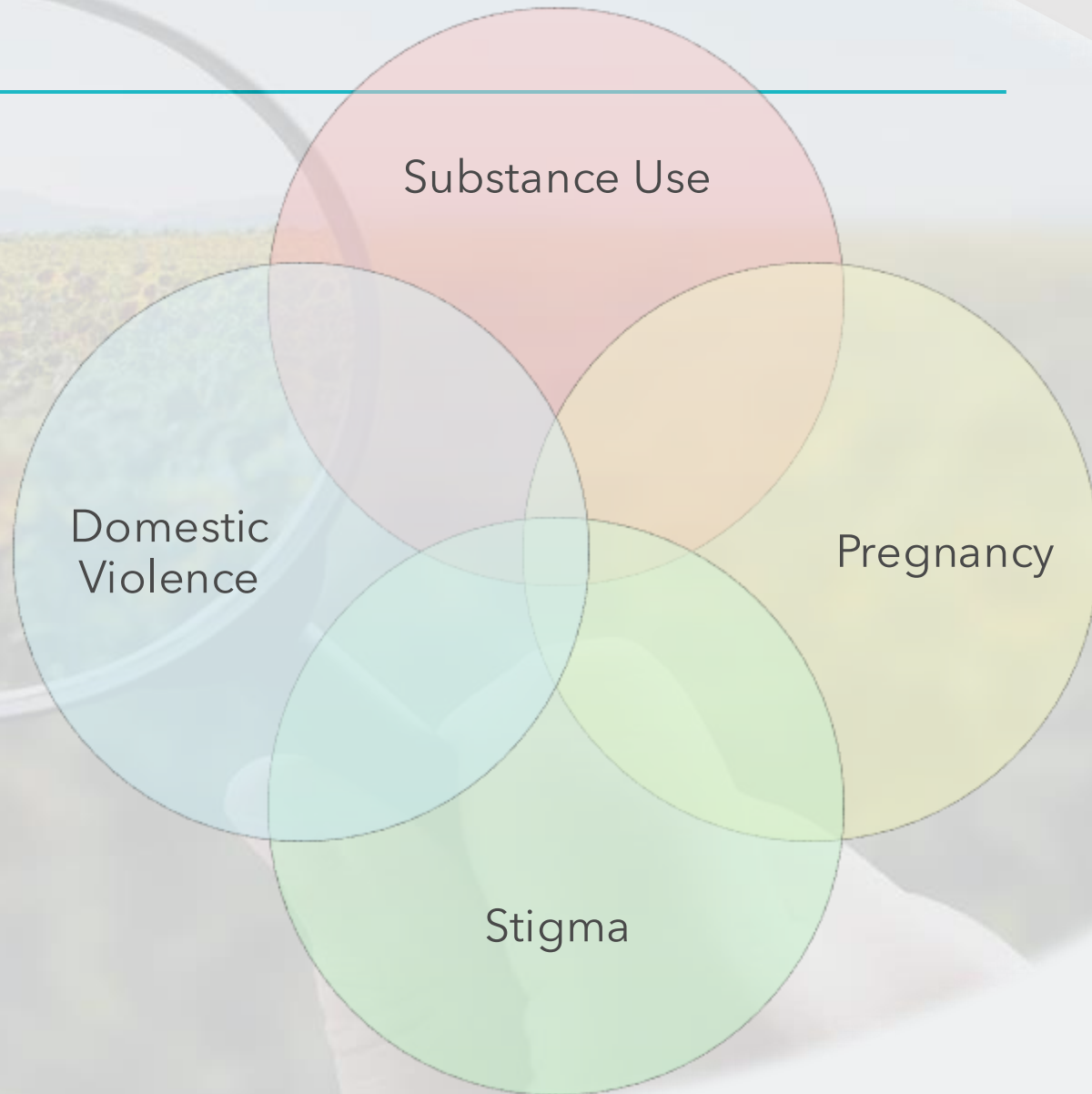
Takes an
SSRI and
Subutex.

Works at a
warehouse.

Learn More About Morgan



What are you noticing in this scenario about this intersection?



Morgan: Part 2

Is there anything about Morgan's situation that may make it challenging to trust someone in your role?





Let's Talk

What methods do you use to meaningfully and privately talk about domestic violence with your clients?

Morgan: Part Three



What resources/referral sources you might share with Morgan? How do you explain them? What makes you feel confident in a warm referral? How do you learn about your communities resources?

In Your Work . . .



BE AWARE OF BIASES



RECOGNIZE THE
POWER DIFFERENTIAL

Moving Beyond a
Screening
Question

&

Once You Know,
You Know



Asking about Domestic Violence

Normalize the conversation.

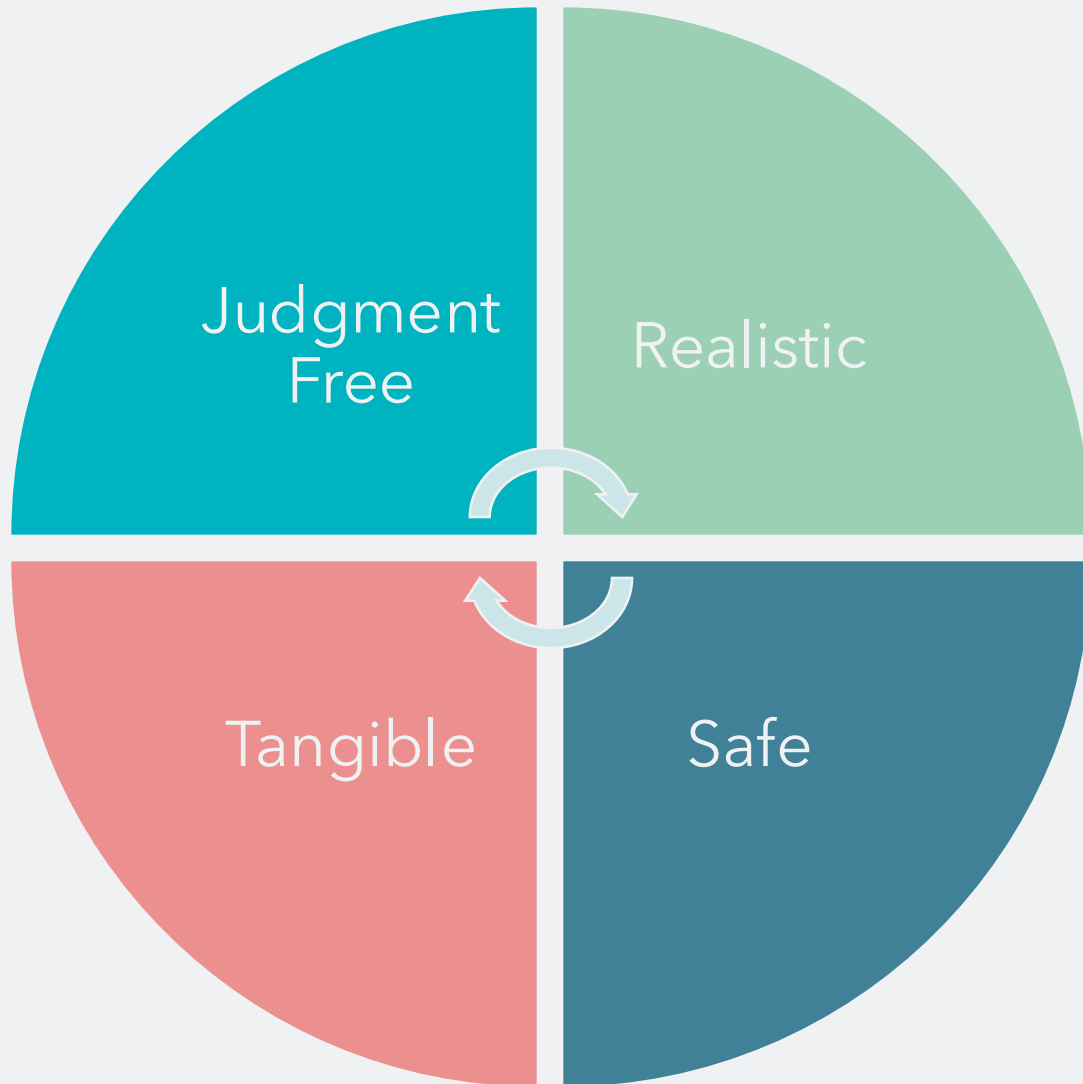
Ask in private.

Talk to EVERY patient.

Survivors are
constantly navigating
their options.



Survivor-Centered Support



Some Helpful Questions If Someone Discloses DV

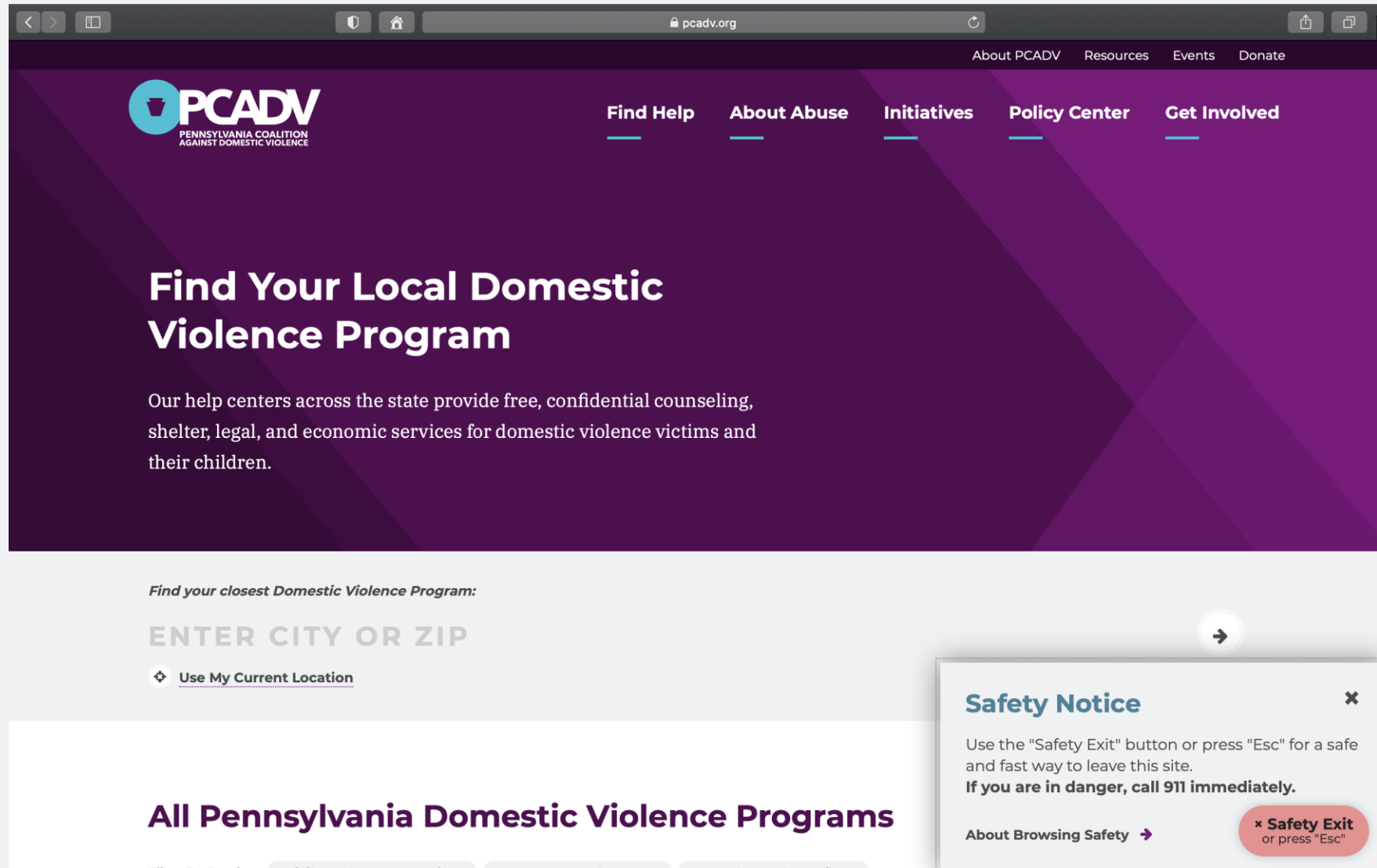
What do you need from me?

What do you need from [my organization]?

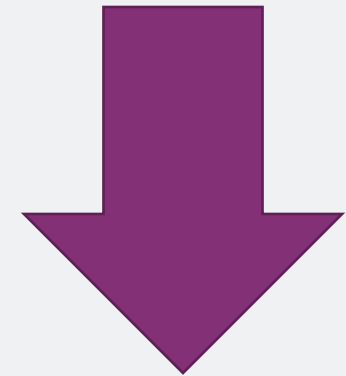
What are you most concerned about?

What do you need today?

Find Your Local Domestic Violence Program in PA

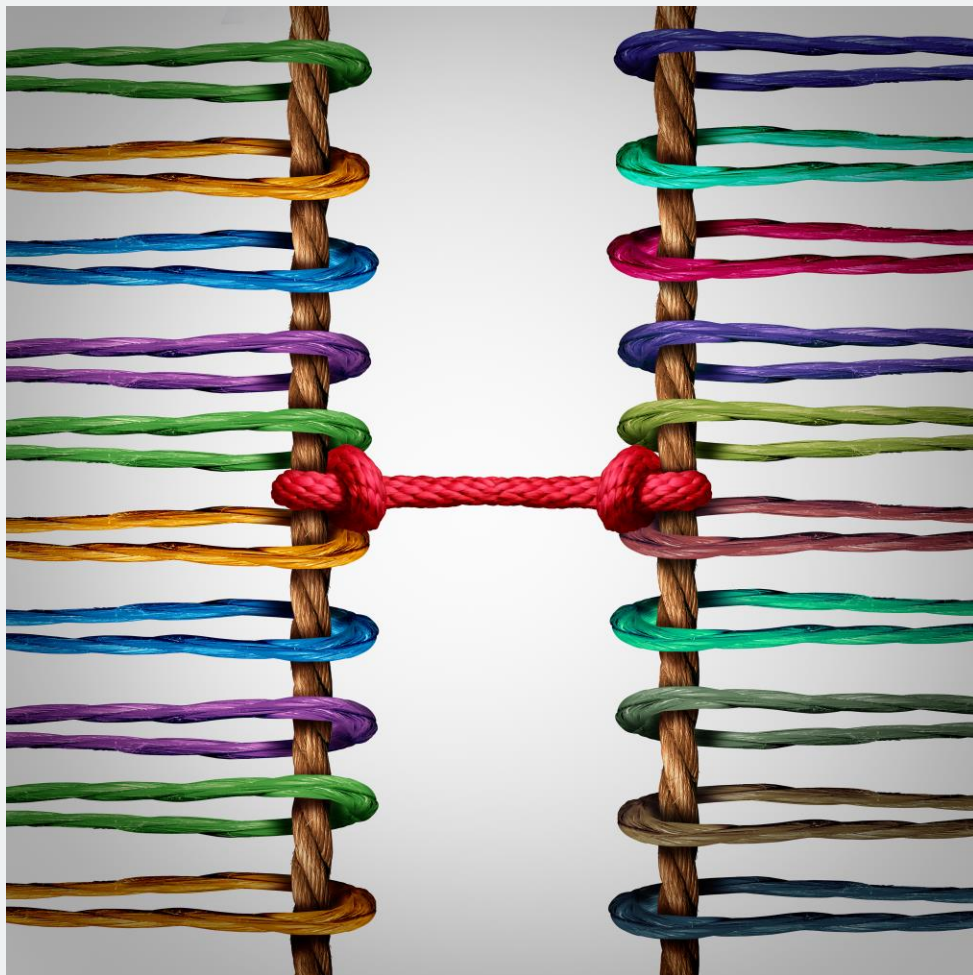


The screenshot shows the PCADV website with a dark purple header. The main navigation bar includes links for 'Find Help', 'About Abuse', 'Initiatives', 'Policy Center', and 'Get Involved'. The 'Find Help' link is underlined. Below the header, the main content area has a large heading 'Find Your Local Domestic Violence Program' and a subtext: 'Our help centers across the state provide free, confidential counseling, shelter, legal, and economic services for domestic violence victims and their children.' Below this is a search bar with the placeholder text 'ENTER CITY OR ZIP' and a button with a right arrow. A link 'Use My Current Location' is also present. At the bottom, there is a section titled 'All Pennsylvania Domestic Violence Programs' with a filter dropdown set to 'All Local Organizations'. A 'Safety Notice' pop-up is visible in the bottom right corner of the screenshot, stating: 'Use the "Safety Exit" button or press "Esc" for a safe and fast way to leave this site. If you are in danger, call 911 immediately.' and includes a 'Safety Exit' button.



www.pcadv.org/find-help/find-your-local-domestic-violence-program

Suggestions for Collaborating



Cross-training about your roles and work

Collaborate often-don't wait for a crisis

Celebrate the successes of collaboration

Warm Referrals



Questions?

Contact Information

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Prevention Manager
PCADV

mreale@pcadv.org

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