

■ Executive Summary

California must transform its response to intimate partner violence from a focus on crisis intervention to one of prevention and early intervention.

The Little Hoover Commission began studying California's response to intimate partner violence in late 2019. In May 2020, the Commission released its first report on the topic, [Intimate Partner Violence: Getting Money to Those on the Front Line](#), which asked the Governor and Legislature to provide grant funding upfront to service providers.

This second report focuses on the organization of California's response to intimate partner violence. The Commission hopes this report will serve as a stepping stone to the state's transition to a holistic, strategic, evidence-based, and collaborative approach to help Californians reduce, prevent, and recover from intimate partner violence. The findings in this report fall into four categories: Governance, Prevention and Early Intervention, Firearms, and Economic Security.

Governance

The Commission believes there must be a statewide strategy to reduce, prevent, and recover from intimate partner violence, and that there must be a leader accountable for progress. Currently, the state suffers from a siloed approach that results in critical gaps in the state's response. Most of our resources, for example, are directed toward crisis intervention instead of prevention and early intervention.

In response to these findings, the Commission recommends the Governor and Legislators:

- Adopt a strategic approach to intimate partner violence that is focused on prevention and early intervention, while continuing to support crisis intervention and victim services.
- Appoint a leader who will be accountable for progress on the state's strategy. Among other responsibilities, this leader should bring

stakeholders together to craft the state's strategy; create a data collection and analysis framework and ensure service providers receive grant funding for this purpose; modernize processes; facilitate expertise within state government on intimate partner violence; ensure underserved groups are prioritized within the plan; and design a funding framework that will advance the state's goals.

Prevention and Early Intervention

California does not have a substantial prevention or early intervention program. The state should create and adequately fund prevention and early intervention programs, and ensure that these initiatives are included in all applicable statewide strategic plans ranging from early childhood education to reducing homelessness.

The state has a rigid approach to batterer intervention programs. The state's requirements do not meet the needs for those of modest means, who do not speak English, live in rural areas, and many other people. The state should review its requirements for batterer intervention programs to determine if they facilitate rehabilitation and ensure those programs are available to individuals who cannot afford them.

Firearms

California must enforce its firearms laws and ensure that firearms immediately are removed from people prohibited from owning them. The Commission identified some challenges that prevent the state from doing that. One is that the databases from which the list of people prohibited from owning firearms is drawn need to be modernized. Currently, there is no way for the system to automatically crosscheck registered firearms against people who are prohibited from owning them. Another is that the state lacks the personnel to lead these efforts.

California is not a competitive employer: It requires its special agents to hold college degrees yet pays less than other agencies that do not require a degree. Its hiring process also can take 12 months, which is too long for many to wait.

The state should enforce existing firearms laws by speeding up IT modernization and reworking the special agent classification to be more competitive.

Economic Security

It is imperative for survivors to be economically secure: Intimate partner violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women. The primary reason women return to abusive partners is economic insecurity. Further, many survivors experience economic abuse in their relationship, which can destroy their finances and credit. To help survivors leave and support themselves, the state should:

- Create a one-stop identity and financial program to help survivors start over.
- Transition the Victim Compensation Board model for state funds from one of reimbursement to real-time payments.
- Officially recognize domestic violence survivors as a group facing barriers to employment.
- Connect survivors with state apprenticeship programs so they may earn a living while completing their education or training.
- Require all state-administered domestic violence grants to provide a living wage and annual cost-of-living increases to awardees.
- Advertise its CalWORKS emergency housing program for survivors and adjust it to be more flexible for survivors needs.
- Expand its Domestic Violence Housing First program, create a stable, sustainable funding stream, and require awardees to participate in monitoring and evaluation.

- Include domestic violence experts in its policymaking processes for homelessness and housing instability.