

Seeking Safety, Equity, and Justice

Experiences of Survivors with Social Service Agencies

Summary

ODVN completed a statewide survey with 588 survivors to deepen our understanding of the experiences of survivors when seeking help from law enforcement, the court system, and social services agencies. Here are some significant findings for survivors' experiences with social services agencies.

Significant Findings

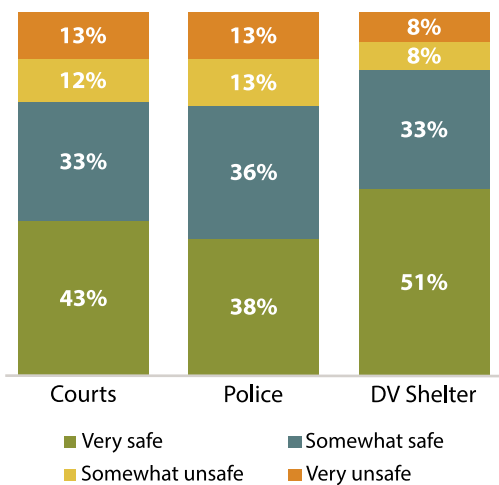
- Exactly 70% of the respondents received social or support services from shelters, non-residential and community-based programs, and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS).
- Two-thirds (66%) of them used domestic violence shelters, 56% received housing assistance, 77% received counseling services, 62% attended support groups, 67% received help from ODJFS, and 56% were involved with ODJFS child protective services.
- The majority of survivors who received support from social services reported that it was helpful.
- Service found most helpful—Support groups (96%)
- Service found least helpful—CPS (73%)
- Women of color survivors were involved with child welfare workers 21% more often than their white counterparts. Women of color who were not Black/African American experienced high rates of being threatened with losing their children, more than double the rate for white women.

Exactly 70% of the respondents received **social or support services** from shelters, non-residential and community-based programs, and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services.

Services	Services Helpful	Services Not Helpful
Support Groups	96%	4%
Domestic Violence Shelters	95%	5%
Counseling	94%	6%
Housing Assistance	91%	9%
ODJFS	89%	11%
ODJFS Child Protective Services	73%	27%



Survivors felt safer in a DV shelter than they did in the court system or with the police.



- LGBTQ+ survivors experienced involvement with the child welfare system 15% more often than heterosexual survivors. LGBTQ+ survivors had the highest rate of CPS involvement of all groups, 15% higher than non-LGBTQ+ survivors.
- Barriers survivors reported to accessing social services included:
 - Lack of access to interpreters
 - Fear of losing their children
 - Fear of not being believed
 - Fear of being treated unfairly
- Survivors told us that if their advocates were mandated reporters (meaning they were required by law to make reports to children’s services) they would not seek services again from them.

Recommendations

- **Confidentiality**—Survivors were adamant that making advocates mandated reporters would have an extremely negative impact on their ability to seek help in dangerous situations. While Ohio has yet to grant privilege to domestic violence advocates, this gain cannot come at the price of privacy by making advocates mandated reporters.
- **Child Welfare Reform**—Reform is needed so that marginalized communities are not over-represented in child welfare system Ohio has invested impactful training resources in the Safe and Together CPS model for these cases; however, this model needs to be institutionalized throughout the CPS system.
- **Outreach Strategies**—Reaching and engaging with survivors of color requires staff diversity, building trust, thinking outside the box, building partnerships with their key community leaders, and an internal commitment to continuously address bias.