



# Richmond Clinic is supporting survivors of Intimate Partner Violence

**Content warning: This article covers topics related to intimate partner violence and domestic violence that can be triggering or upsetting.**

*By Amber Hollingsworth*

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A few years ago, Family Medicine's Richmond Clinic staff partnered with Volunteers of America's Home Free program and Raphael House of Portland to create an integrated, culturally specific, and trauma-informed support program for survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV). Advocates from Raphael House and Volunteers of America are embedded in the clinic and can meet with Richmond patients one-on-one there or in the community. They provide clients with:

- Safety planning
- Preparation and filing of protective orders
- Court accompaniment
- Emergency housing
- Rent and utility assistance
- Connection and relocation assistance with IPV shelters

As IPV Advocate Alexis Willette explains, "By being a confidential advocate working in the health care system, it has opened more opportunities for patients to feel comfortable when disclosing abuse. Specifically, when they have children. By not being mandatory reporters, we are able to provide a different lens of approach to domestic violence compared to providers or social workers. There is this sigh of relief patients get knowing they can be completely open without the fear of losing their children to CPS when they are working with us."

The team conducts regular Lunch and Learns on topics like the IPV/Legal overlap, IPV and Immigration, and how to screen for IPV in a trauma-informed way, as well as trains staff on secondary traumatic stress. "We've also worked to acknowledge that this isn't something that happens to just our patients, this happens to *us* - our staff, our friends, our family, and all our loved ones," says Social Determinants

of Health Coordinator Lia Sebring. “IPV and domestic violence doesn’t discriminate... We’ve implemented posters and cards with support lines and educational information in all the bathrooms – including our employee bathrooms – to ensure that everyone has access to the support if they need it.”

In 2019 and 2020, this program served nearly 200 patients. “Overall, we’ve seen a general culture shift to a more accepting, understanding, and trauma-informed way to care for our patients and ourselves because of the important work the IPV advocates have provided,” Lia says.

## Help is available to you and your loved ones 24/7

- Call to Safety (in English): [503-235-5333](tel:503-235-5333)
- Linea UNICA (en Español): [503-232-4448](tel:503-232-4448)

(tel: 503-5032-2448)

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