

# Child Care as a Domestic Violence Issue

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## Domestic Violence Survivors Need Affordable, Flexible, and Reliable Child Care

One of the greatest barriers preventing survivors of domestic violence from leaving abusive partners is the financial ability to support themselves and their children. Specifically, many survivors express the need for affordable, flexible, and reliable child care, housing, and transportation to create a pathway to safety and stability for themselves and their children. However, survivors face many unique challenges when arranging and providing child care for their children. It is critical for Congress to consider the importance of child care to survivors of domestic violence and their children.



### *Child Care Sabotage Keeps Survivors out of School and the Workforce*

It's common for an abusive partner to purposefully sabotage child care arrangements in an effort to negatively impact a survivor's employment or educational opportunities. In a [study of the impact of intimate partner violence on student parents](#), child care sabotage was one of the primary barriers for respondents in completing their education.<sup>1</sup> Students reported being forced to take semesters off because a partner refused to provide child care, or struggled with completing classwork. [Working parents are similarly impacted](#) with 38 percent saying child care sabotage impacts their ability to work and about 25 percent saying they were unable to work at all because of child care responsibilities.<sup>2</sup> [Child care sabotage comes in many forms](#) including

<sup>1</sup> Voth Schrag, R. J.; Edmond, T; Nordberg, A. Understanding School Sabotage Among Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence from Diverse Populations. *Violence Against Women* 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Showalter, K; Maguire-Jack, K; McCloskey, R. Mothers' Resilience: Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence Survivors at Work. *Children* 2022.

the abusive partner agreeing to provide child care but backing out at the last minute, a refusal to provide child care, or not allowing the children to go to daycare.<sup>3</sup> Even after separating from an abuser, child care becomes an additional and often insurmountable solo cost for survivors, especially if they are [ineligible for social supports](#) including child care assistance programs.<sup>4</sup> This can especially [impact immigrant survivors](#) who often face barriers in receiving child care subsidies or accessing government programs.<sup>5</sup>

Child care affordability is a particularly pervasive problem for Black families. A median income Black family with two children spends about [56% of their total income on child care](#).<sup>6</sup> Those statistics are based on a two-parent household and would be completely untenable for a single parent with two or more children in child care. Additionally, survivors handling the cost by themselves also have to handle transporting their child to and from child care. This can become even more costly for Black, Latinx, and American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) families as they are more likely to live in [child care deserts](#) with limited child care options.<sup>7</sup> That means survivors already struggling with cost likely would have to pay more in gas to transport their children while also risking being late to work with longer commutes. Access to affordable, reliable child care services would allow survivors to succeed in school and the workplace and not need to depend on unreliable and abusive partners for child care.

### ***Child Care Helps Survivors Leave Abusive Relationships***

One of the main reasons survivors can't leave an abusive partner is that they are unable to financially support themselves or their children. [In a survey](#) asking the most common financial factors for staying with or returning to an abusive partner, 83 percent of respondents stated they were unable to support themselves or their children on their income, while 50 percent of respondents stated they would have problems affording child care.<sup>8</sup> The lack of affordable child care became even more striking during the pandemic for survivors of color. According to a study measuring the economic impact of COVID-19 on survivors of color, Black and Brown survivors faced the greatest financial insecurity and [had access to 5.76 times fewer financial resources](#) than white survivors.<sup>9</sup> Those with less financial security stated they were more likely to go back to an abusive partner, which leads to continued issues of maintaining employment or education while also finding reliable child care. Ensuring survivors have access to affordable child care would alleviate the financial burden of providing child care and allow survivors more financial freedom to leave abusive partners.

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<sup>3</sup> Hess, C.; Del Rosario, A. Dreams Deferred: A Survey of the Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Survivors' Education, Careers, and Economic Security. Institute for Women's Policy Research 2018.

<sup>4</sup> "Key Goals: Addressing Barriers That Exist for Victims to Ensure Ongoing Safety and Financial Security." Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project, 2018. <http://georgiafatalityreview.com/key-goals/address-barriers-that-exist-for-victims-to-ensure-ongoing-safety-and-financial-security/>

<sup>5</sup> Ullrich, Rebecca; Schmit, Stephanie; Cosse, Ruth. Inequitable Access to Child Care Subsidies. Center for Law and Social Policy 2019. [https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2019/04/2019\\_inequitableaccess.pdf](https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2019/04/2019_inequitableaccess.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Novoa, Cristina, How Child Care Disruptions Hurt Parents of Color the Most. Center for American Progress 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Novoa, How Child Care Disruptions Hurt Parents of Color Most.

<sup>8</sup> Hess, Dreams Deferred.

<sup>9</sup> Ruiz, Elena; Ruvalcaba, Yanet; Berenstain, Nora; Fluegeman, Steph, Measuring the Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Survivors of Color. MeToo and FreeFrom 2020.

[Lindsay McAndrew](#), a mom of three who left an abusive husband during the pandemic, stated that “if there was universal child care or something guaranteed, I could devote time and energy to my career and provide for my kids instead of constantly juggling 10,000 things.”<sup>1</sup>

Without access to child care, survivors are unable to look for work, attend job interviews, or go to work or school. However, with access to affordable, reliable, and flexible child care, it’s easier for survivors to maintain employment, acquire new skills or education, and seek promotions internally or interview to find jobs that better provide for their families.

**“Universal child care or some form of child care assistance would allow me to devote energy to my career and provide for my kids instead of constantly juggling 10,000 things.”**

– Lindsay McAndrew, mother of three

### ***Lack of Child Care Options Endangers Parents and Their Children***

When parents can’t access affordable, flexible, and reliable quality child care, they are often forced to make the impossible choice of missing work or leaving their children alone with their abusive partner. [Rebecca Hogue](#) left her two-year-old son, Jeremiah, with her boyfriend while she worked the New Year’s Eve night shift.<sup>10</sup> She returned from work to find her boyfriend missing and Jeremiah dead in his crib. Even though Hogue was not home at the time of the abuse and didn’t notice warning signs her boyfriend had been abusing her son, she was charged with first-degree murder under Oklahoma’s failure to protect law. If Hogue had access to flexible and reliable child care that was available after regular business hours, it’s possible Jeremiah’s death could have been prevented and Hogue wouldn’t be incarcerated.

Hogue isn’t the only survivor impacted by these laws. Failure to protect laws can have even more harmful effects for families of color as [Latinx, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Black children](#) make-up a disproportionate number of the foster care system.<sup>11</sup> During the pandemic, survivors of color who were considered essential workers were at [extremely high risk of both housing and food insecurity](#), which could lead to their children being taken away and parental rights terminated.<sup>12</sup> This is in addition to the fact that many parents of color are [less likely to have jobs with telework capability](#), meaning it’s more likely they will need child care during work hours which don’t always fit in a typical work schedule.<sup>13</sup> This is why providing child care with flexible hours for those who don’t work a 9-5 schedule is key.

Similarly, other parents are faced with the impossible choice of leaving their children alone during work or missing out on a much-needed paycheck. [Shanesha Taylor](#), a mother of two,

<sup>10</sup> Michaels, Samantha. “Her Boyfriend Killed Her Baby While She Was at Work. Oklahoma is Sending Her to Prison.” Mother Jones, Feb. 10, 2022. <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2022/02/child-abuse-mothers-sexist-failure-to-protect-law-rebecca-hogue-oklahoma/>

<sup>11</sup> Roberts, Dorothy. “Race and Class in the Child Welfare System.” PBS Frontline,

<sup>12</sup> Ruiz, et. al. Measuring the Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Survivors of Color.

<sup>13</sup> Novoa, How Child Care Disruptions Hurt Parents of Color Most.

was arrested for leaving her two sons in the car while she interviewed for a job.<sup>14</sup> At the time of the interview, Taylor was unable to afford child care and was experiencing homelessness, so getting the job she interviewed for was especially important for her family. Taylor stated, “it was a difficult decision because I was basically choosing between caring for my children or providing for my children.”

**“That’s a difficult decision because I was basically choosing between caring for my children or providing for my children.”**

– Shaneshia Taylor,  
mother of two

[Providing parents with concrete support](#), like affordable childcare, helps reduce stress that can result in child maltreatment while also creating a better environment for the child’s safety, well-being, and healing.<sup>15</sup>

If either of these women, and many other parents like them, had access to affordable, flexible, and reliable quality child care, they would have been able to ensure their children’s safety and well-being while providing for their families.

**As Congress considers legislation to address our economic recovery, it is essential that they provide funding for affordable, flexible, and reliable quality child care to help all parents, including survivors of domestic violence. Child care is fundamental to find or maintain employment and educational opportunities, keep parents, and their children safe and healthy, and provide for their families.**

<sup>14</sup> Murray, Rheana. “Mom Who Left Kids in Car for Job Interview Glad for ‘2<sup>nd</sup> Chance’.” ABC News, July 25, 2014. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/arizona-mom-left-kids-car-job-interview-glad/story?id=24712432>

<sup>15</sup> “Protective Factors.” Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina. <https://www.preventchildabusenc.org/resource-hub/protective-factors/>