

# Serving Male Domestic Violence Survivors in Shelter

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# barrier free living



**We work with people with disabilities — both survivors of domestic violence and homeless men, women and children — to thrive in safe, supportive communities.**

[www.bflnyc.org](http://www.bflnyc.org)

# Who We Are & What We Do

Barrier Free Living (BFL) began its groundbreaking work with people with disabilities in 1978 as a Federally-funded Research and Demonstration Project first known as “Project Outward Bound” (archive photo, left).



BFL has gone on to work with thousands of people with disabilities, has launched several successful award winning programs and has become a leader in working with survivors of domestic violence with disabilities.

# The Programs of BFL



## **Transitional Housing**

We provide safe shelter, case management, and occupational therapy services to formerly homeless men and women with disabilities who require home attendant services.



## **Secret Garden**

Since 1990, BFL's community-based Secret Garden program has been working with survivors of domestic violence with disabilities providing counseling, support groups, occupational therapy and case management services.



## **Freedom House**

Safe, accessible emergency shelter for survivors of domestic violence with disabilities and their families.

Freedom House offers case management, children's services, individual counseling, and support groups.



## **BFL Apartments Supportive Housing**

Permanent homes for survivors of domestic violence with disabilities, and their families as well as veterans with disabilities. Counseling, skill-building workshops and community events.

# Presentation Overview



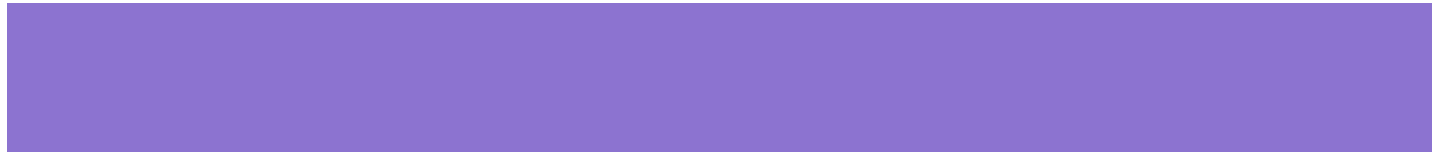
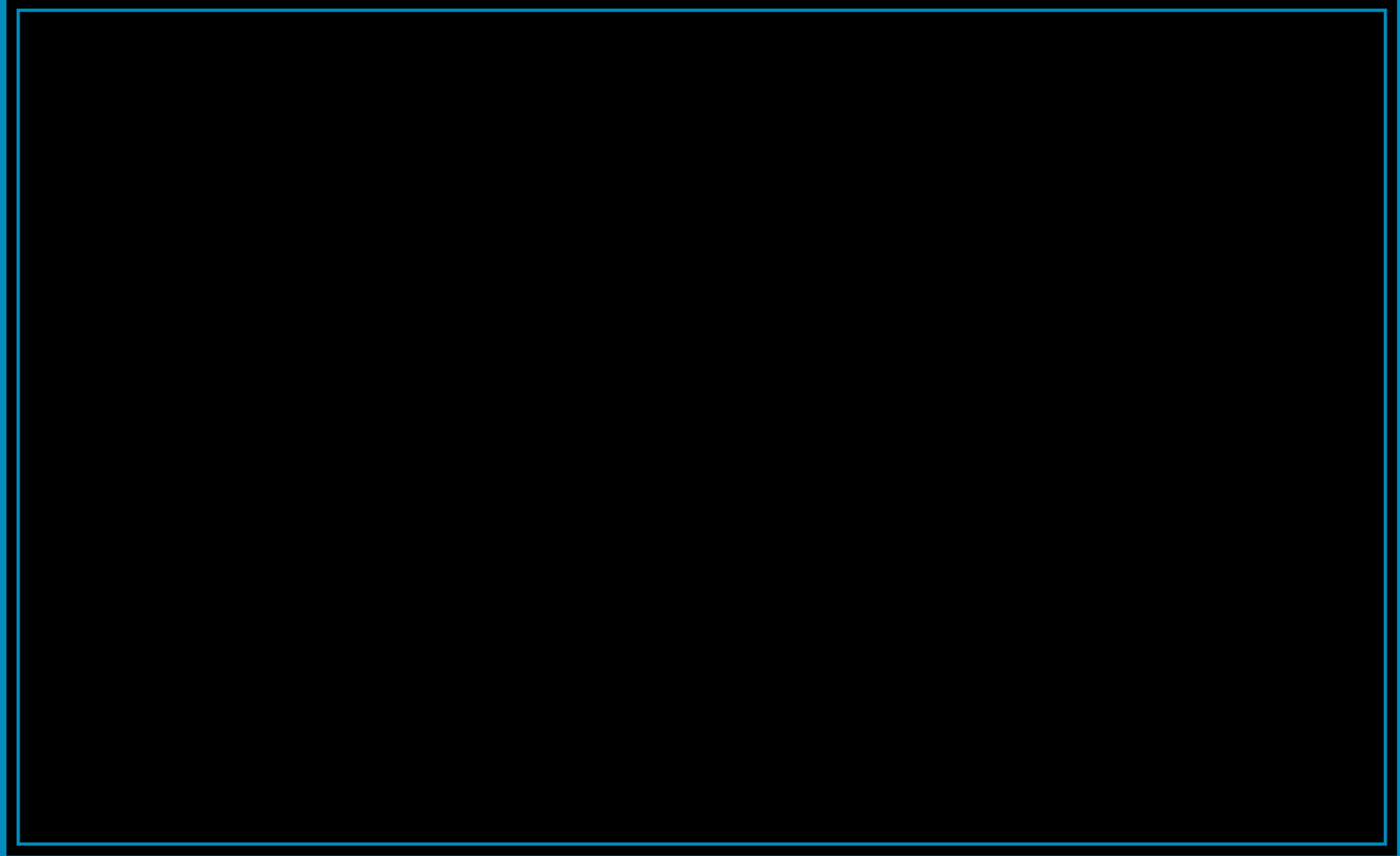
- Define the terms “domestic violence” and “disability”.
- Discuss barriers men face coming forward as victims of domestic violence.
- Identify stigmas associated with men being victims of domestic violence.
- Share what we have learned as accommodations and strategies to overcome barriers.

# What is a Disability?



- According to the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) National Network**, the ADA defines a disabled person as someone "who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. It also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are regarded as having a disability."
- **The Social Security Administration** defines a disability (for an adult) as "the inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity (SGA) by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment(s) which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months."

# What is Domestic Violence?



# What Is Domestic Violence? <sup>8</sup>



One in seven men age 18+ in the U.S. has been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner.\*

- Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive tactics that can include physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and emotional abuse, perpetrated by one person against an adult intimate or interpersonal partner, with the goal of establishing and maintaining power and control.
- Domestic violence occurs in all kinds of intimate relationships, including married couples, people who are dating, couples who live together, people with children in common, same-sex partners, people who were formerly in a relationship with the person abusing them, parent/child relationships, and teen dating relationships.



# Forms of Abuse

- Abuse of men take many of the same forms as it does against women: physical violence, intimidation and threats, sexual, emotional , psychological, verbal financial abuse, social isolation.
- Men are frequently challenged with the use of institutions to inflict abuse by taking out false restraining orders or not allowing the victim access to his children.

# Impact of Abuse

- Fear and loss of feelings of safety
- Feelings of guilt/shame
- Trust Issues
- Anxiety and Flashbacks
- Loneliness and isolation
- Low self-esteem and/or self-hatred
- Depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm and attempted suicide
- Use of alcohol or other drugs to cope with abuse
- Physical injuries
- Loss of work
- Physical illness



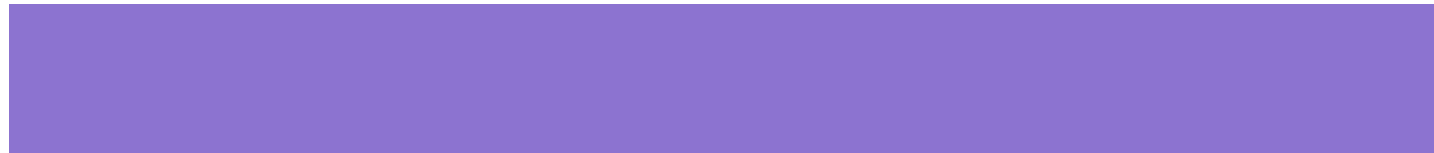
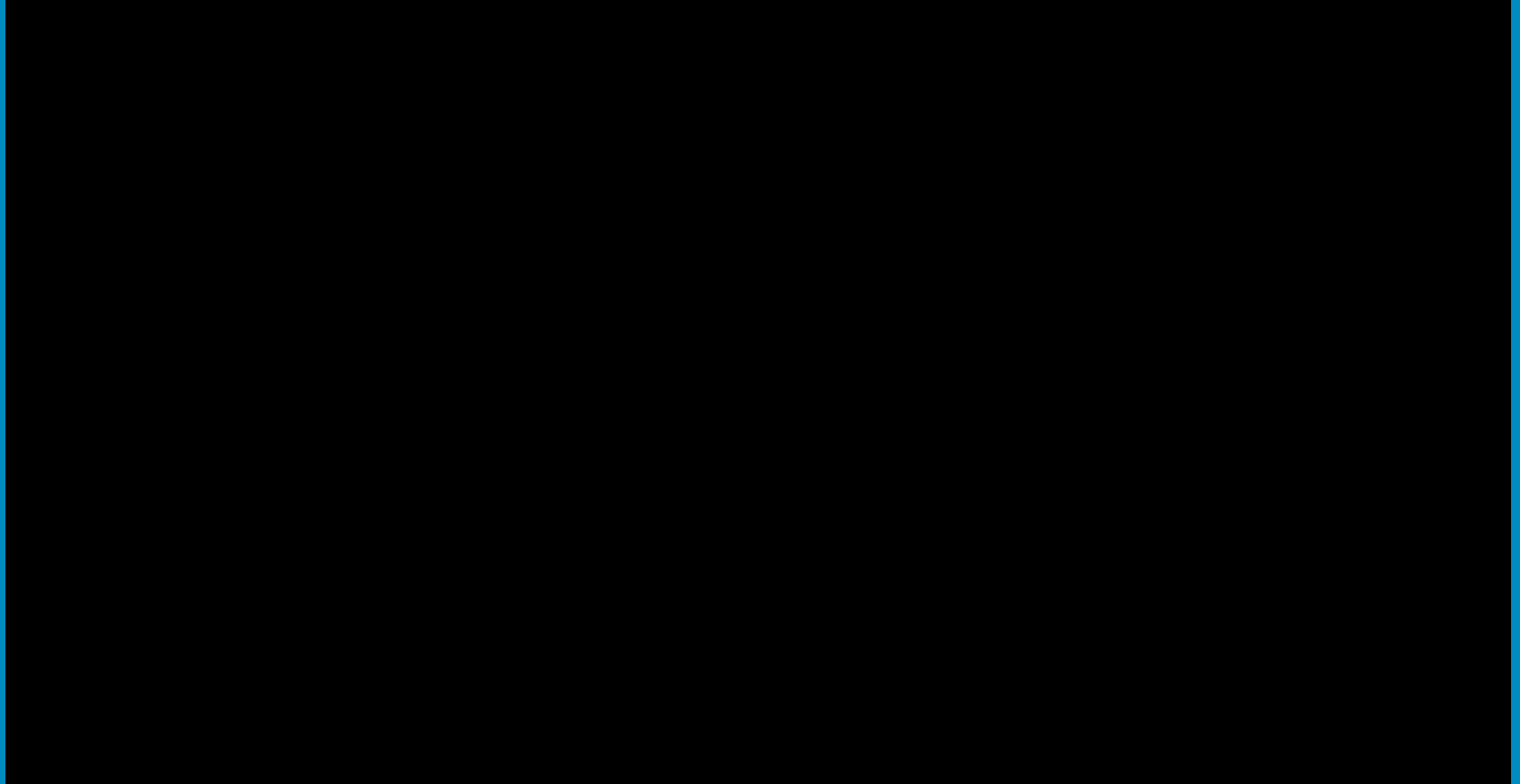
# Impact of Abuse on Men

- Sexual dysfunction and/or impotence
- More likely to suffer from PTSD, anxiety disorders and depression
- Higher probability of substance abuse
- Being outed (sexual preference, HIV status)



# Men Are Stigmatized and Feel Helpless

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# Barriers to Disclosing

- Hotline workers say they only help women, infer or explicitly state that men must be the instigator.
- Men report that the police fail to respond to a call or are ridiculed or are incorrectly arrested as the primary aggressor.
- Report losing custody, blocked from seeing their children, and were falsely accused by their partners of IPV.

# Barriers to Disclosing

- Many men believe there are no resources or support services available for male victims.
- Falsely arrested males victims result in their children being unprotected from the perpetrator of the violence.
- Many men to suffer the abuse in silence in an attempt to protect their children.

# Barriers to Disclosing

- Lack of knowledge of individuals with disabilities about victims services available in the community
- Lack of accessible shelters or temporary housing
- Personal Assistant Providers (PAS) are often family members or relatives – fear of losing PAS or backlash.
- Fear of losing independence (i.e. going into a group home or nursing home)

# Freedom House Interventions

- Staffing
- Counseling
- Groups
- Community





# It's All About Empowerment

- Provide individuals with disabilities the necessary tools to identifying abusive behavior, and the resources to (re)act accordingly.
- Listen, Listen, Listen
- Ensure that all disabled individuals have access to a phone or alert button that they can use independently at home.

# Systemic Changes Are Needed

- Increase training about the diversity of IPV victims for members of the DV service system and support community.
- A re-examination by police departments with regard to how they handle incidents of IPV and how police officers respond when victims do not meet gendered notions of the dynamics of IPV.

# Systemic Changes *cont.*

- Public education concerning IPV and outreach materials for potential victims should be gender-inclusive.
- A review of curriculums in our Educational System of Social Service providers to ensure that all IPV experiences, regardless of perpetrator and victim gender should be validated.

# Thank you!

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